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Official Magazine - Australia

10 PAGE REPORT!

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TONY HAWK 9



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ASSASSIN'S CREED

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Tom Clancy's new techno-thriller!

ISSUE 4 JUNE 2007
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THE END BEGINS

MA 15+ Strong violence,
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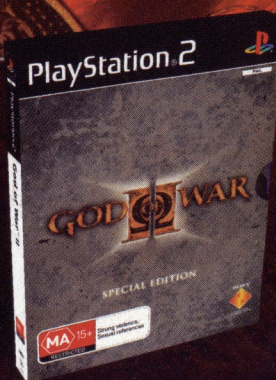
PlayStation 2



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Official Strategy Guide



"The Darkness is looking like the must have FPS for the PS3"
- Official PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

The Darkness

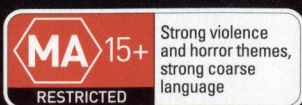
Experience intense cinematic action in this gritty, first-person shooter based on the epic comic "The Darkness" by Top Cow

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PLAYSTATION 3



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CONTENTS

COVER



- 049 GTA IV**
First look at the game of the year!
- 064 Assassin's Creed**
Usurper to the throne!
- 028 Clancy's End War**
Another of Clancy's offspring!
- 074 Tony Hawk 9**
The Hawkman cometh!
- 082 Oblivion**
The greatest RPG ever made?
- 072 Urban Legends**
The lies that gamers tell!

PS3

- 028** Tom Clancy's End War (preview)
- 030** HEIST (preview)
- 032** Ninja Gaiden Sigma (preview)
- 034** WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008 (preview)
- 036** Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End (preview)
- 038** Fracture (preview)
- 040** Saboteur (preview)
- 041** Conan (preview)
- 042** Colin McRae DIRT (preview)
- 049** GTA IV (feature)
- 064** Assassin's Creed (feature)
- 074** Tony Hawk 9 (feature)
- 082** The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (review)
- 086** Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas (review)
- 090** Armored Core 4 (review)
- 091** Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight (review)

PS2

- 044** Tomb Raider: Anniversary (preview)
- 046** Crash of the Titans (preview)
- 092** SOCOM US Navy SEALs Combined Assault (review)
- 094** Everybody's Tennis (review)
- 095** Medal of Honor Vanguard (review)
- 095** SBK-07 World Superbike Championship (review)

PSP

- 096** Virtua Tennis 3 (review)
- 097** After Burner: Black Falcon (review)
- 098** Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters (review)

28

46



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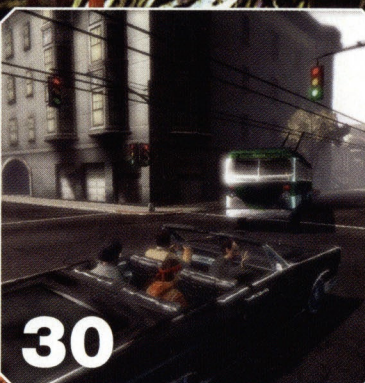
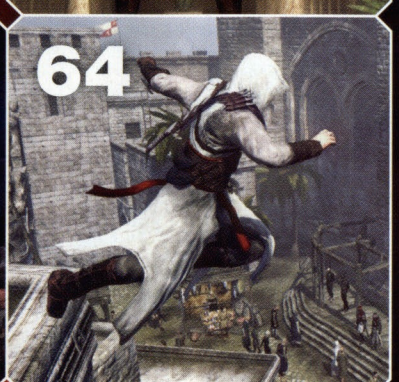
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PlayStation 2
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

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REGULARS

008	Editor's letter	100	Film
010	News	103	Tech
024	Letters	104	Help
026	Subscriptions	108	Re-Play
028	Previews	110	Cheats
078	Online	112	Database
081	Reviews	114	Next issue

EDITOR'S LETTER



date and Luke had written two *New York Times* bestsellers. Oh yeah, we've got mad skills and we won't rest until we've made the best damn mag in the country... nay, the world.

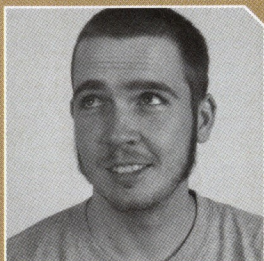
If you scoot over to page 20 you'll find a reader survey with a handful of questions we're busting to get your feedback on. In less time than it'd take to pull a pair of underpants on (not that we've tried) you'll have completed the survey, helped re-shape *OPS* and be in the running to win one of ten copies of *Oblivion* (that's right, the 10/10 best... RPG... ever!). On top of that we've gone and knocked together the greatest subscription offer in history. For only \$92.95 you get 12 issues, an official *OPS* binder (worth \$20) AND a chance to win a PS3 console and \$1000 worth of games.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor

Narayan Pattison
PS3 online: **The_Duude**

OPS needs you! With your help we can make *OPS* better... stronger... faster. We have the technology. Okay, so we don't have six million dollars, but we do have thousands of dollars worth of PS3 consoles and games just begging to be given away to helpful readers. We realise *OPS* is only a four month-old youngster, but magazines mature early. Hell, at four months Phill had already scored his first

FAVOURITE GAMING URBAN LEGEND...



LUKE REILLY

Rumour was if you flew for long enough in *San Andreas* you'd find an island with the bones of Tommy Vercetti on it. A mate believed it and told us he tried it. We laughed. He got cranky and left his own house. We drank all his beer. We also broke his toaster (that was an accident).

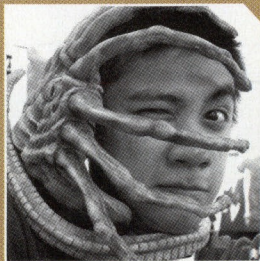
PS3 online: **Capt_Flashheart**



MARK SERRELS

Yeah, that one where Naz claimed he could spank me at any FPS he wanted. Mythmaking at its absolute worst. After his humiliating defeat I could see the slightest glint of a tear rolling gently down his cheek. I almost felt sorry for him. *Almost*.

PS3 online: **Serrels**



PHILLIP JORGE

Bloody *Resident Evil 4*. Some prick told me you could unlock a nude code for Ada Wong if you finished it in less than three hours. It took me three freakin' weeks to beat that time and find out he was lying. No hard feelings though - most of his hair's grown back now.

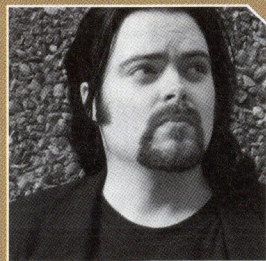
PS3 online: **PhiLLiPo**



NICK O'SHEA

With Crystal Dynamics taking on *Tomb Raider: Legend*, there were nods to its *Legacy of Kain* series, including a painting of Kain in Croft manor and an unlockable Razi costume. Could this mean a next gen instalment of the *Legacy of Kain* series? I bloody hope so.

PS3 online: **Sidochrome**



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

I want something a bit X-Filesy in *GTA IV*. Aliens have been hinted at, Bigfoot was rumoured - bugger that - let's have a tangent where you have to kill some Satanists or vampires or Satanic vampires! I know it's a bit out there, but like the jetpack in *SA* wasn't?

PS3 online: **stoxy242**



DAVE KOZICKI

Chain letters and emails. Pop quiz hotshot... you're minutes from deadline, four emails arrive promising eternal happiness if you forward them to 30 people in time. What do you do? [Clearly not your job. The topic was games, not emails you spaz - Ed.]

PS3 online: **ko-zee-ii**

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

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SHOUT OUTS: Dan Houser :: Mitty "Silver Medallist" Pattison :: ANZAC biscuits (they're NOT cookies) :: electric orange XR5s

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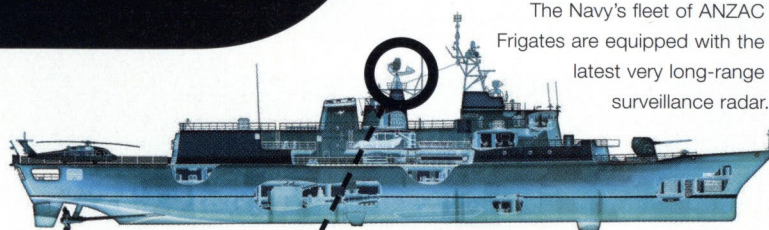
Powerful enough to detect interest.



Wade Barker
Navy Electronic Technician

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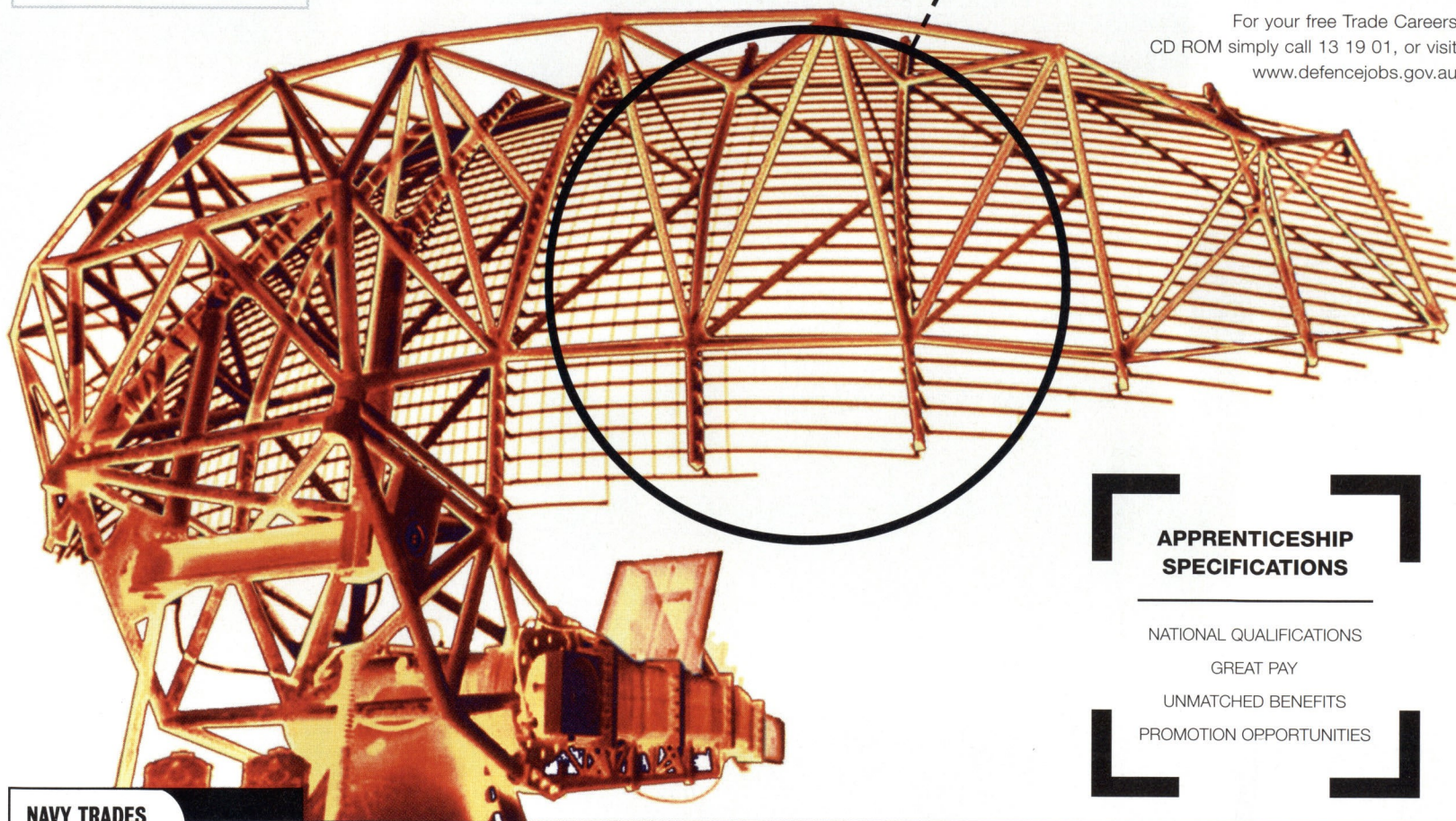


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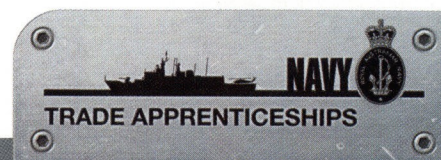
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NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Edited by Mark Serrels

PS3 Launch • Rock Band • Wipeout Pulse •
Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf 2008
Interview with Isa Dick and more...

"I'VE SEEN THE LIGHT!"

To be honest, we've no idea what this golden shard of light shooting down from the sky is. This screenshot looks almost as if Nariko has leaped down into the midst of a huge war and decided to kill every single human being involved. It could be part of a super awesome move or just a part of some stellar art design.

BAD HAIR DAY...

If you were impressed the first time you saw Solid Snake's AFL-style mullet flowing in the wind in *Metal Gear Solid 2* you may well go into cardiac arrest when you see Nariko's fiery locks moving. From what we've seen her hair quite literally has a life of its own and is one of the defining aspects of her character design.



■ "Bugger... I've left the oven on..."

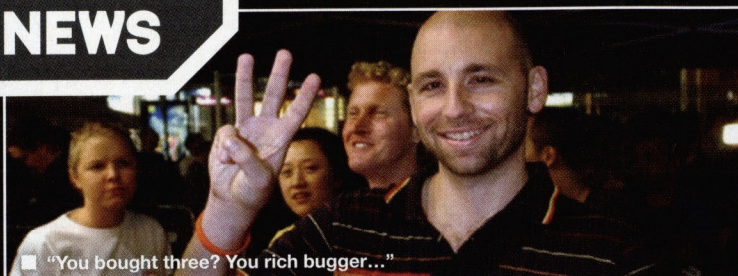
HOTTER THAN HADES...

It has probably been said before, in numerous different ways, but damn that *Heavenly Sword* chick is hot. Most of these third-person slash 'em ups seem to feature buff men. With stubble (not that we don't like that kind of thing, 'cause we do. Ahem...). It's nice to see a gorgeous chick with big boobies again!

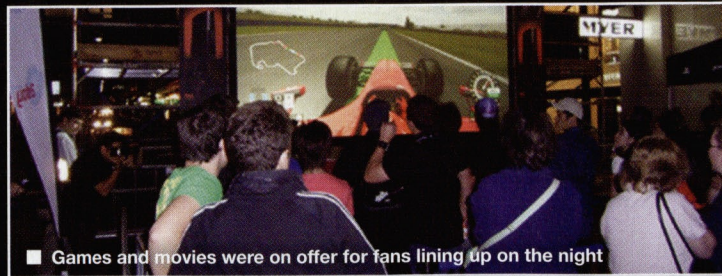
HOLY STROMBOLI...

Seriously... there are an insane amount of bad guys in this shot. In fact we can't recall ever seeing this number of people on-screen in any game. Ever. The fact that we've been assured that this is an in-game shot gives us that familiar 'stiff' feeling downstairs. We could be looking at something very special indeed.

FOR THE LATEST GAMING NEWS HEAD TO WWW.GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU



■ "You bought three? You rich bugger..."



■ Games and movies were on offer for fans lining up on the night

PS3 PS2 PSP

THE LAUNCHING PAD

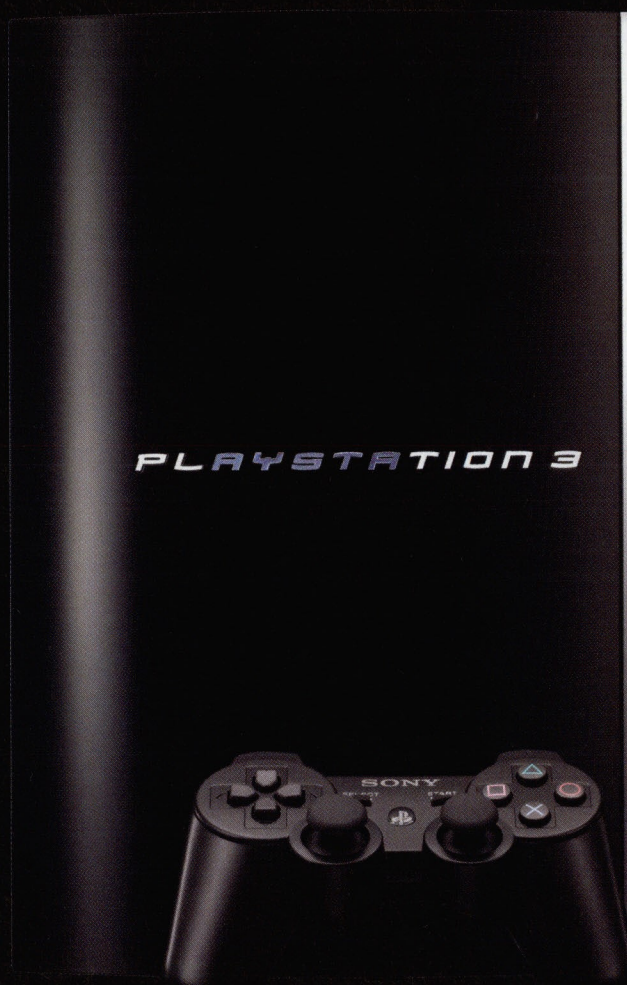
We have lift off...

March 23rd was a momentous day. The wait was over. The pain of watching the rest of the world play as we sat on our twitching hands, weeping in agony, had finally subsided into a somewhat delicious pleasure. Now, after months of torture, we could finally purchase and play the PlayStation 3...

Despite an admittedly disappointing midnight launch, and some terribly researched negative reports in the mainstream media, when the cold hard facts regarding the PS3 launch surfaced the haters were forced to quit their yapping and admit that Sony had once again pulled it out the bag.

In a mere ten days the PlayStation 3 generated an incredible \$33 million worth of revenue. The sale of over 27,000 consoles coupled with the awesome software to hardware ratio was responsible for this huge number. Considering the price point of the console, this launch couldn't be seen as anything other than a huge success, no matter which way the headline hungry press attempted to spin it.

In fact the sales of the PS3 were so strong that it actually created a spike in retail spending, an astonishing first for any console launch. This unprecedented spike combined with the fact that the PS3's launch was actually more successful than the PS2's launch confirmed once and for all that Sony's new multimedia behemoth is here to stay. This fact was echoed by Sony head honcho Michael Ephraim, who claimed that "following a great launch for the PS3 across the country, it's very satisfying for us to see that all consumers wanting to get their hands on a PS3, whether they



pre-ordered or not, were able to. With the PS3 launch now realised, the strong consumer support to date indicates that we've had a successful platform launch and are at a great starting position to grow and develop the PS3 platform."

Sony also succeeded in expanding the developing high definition market, with the addition of the Blu-ray drive as standard. In fact the PS3 launch increased the Blu-ray install base by an insane 4000%, kickstarting the home cinema revolution and essentially leaving its rival, HD-DVD, trailing in its stunning, high-resolution dust. Expect the sales of the discs themselves to increase in a similarly speedy way.

And finally to the software itself, which is home to perhaps the most astonishing statistic of all. In the PS3's launch week an incredible seven PS3 games dominated the top 10 chart, and considering one of those non PS3 games was *Final Fantasy XII*, a PS2 exclusive, we can safely say it was a pretty good week for Sony in general. The top three selling games were *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *MotorStorm*, and *F1* respectively, showing that Aussie gamers, at the very least, have great taste in games.

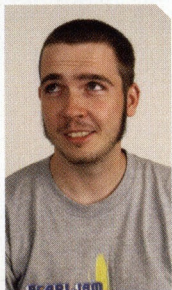
The biggest lesson learnt from this launch is undoubtedly – don't believe the hype. Initial media reports would have you believe that the PS3's launch was a damp squib, and although people weren't queuing in their droves for the midnight launch, the hard facts are obvious: the PS3 had an extremely successful launch, so successful in fact that it actually had consequences that affected markets outside gaming, confirming that the PS3 is at the forefront of a new entertainment revolution.

OUR TWO CENTS ON THE PS3 LAUNCH



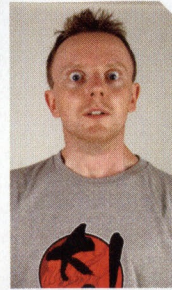
NAZ SAYS

Having spent a mind-boggling 19,536 hours writing about PS2 over the years, seeing the PS3 finally going on sale in Oz was a pretty amazing event. I promised myself I wouldn't cry... Now if only *GTAIV* would hurry up and get here.



LUKE SAYS

Well, after picking up two (one for myself and one for my brother-in-law) my initial thoughts were, "I hope I don't get mugged." If somebody grabbed one I couldn't chase them without letting go of the other. And then I'd have none. And then I'd cry. A little bit.



MARK SAYS

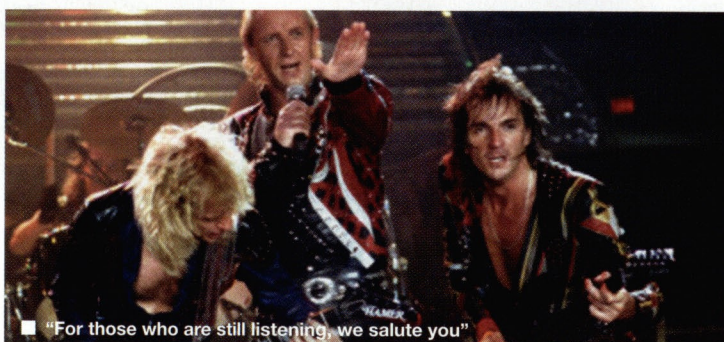
I'll admit I was a little worried when I saw the deflated numbers at the midnight launch, but after hearing the astonishing sales figures my nerve's were steadied. The numbers are huge, and this was an awesome start for the PS3.

EA WILL ROCK YOU

While an official date regarding *Guitar Hero III* is perhaps a long way off (see info nudge for more details) Harmonix recently made an announcement that could make the wait a little more bearable. Teaming up with EA, Harmonix has cranked the ampage up to eleven and beyond with the upcoming *Rock Band*. While *Guitar Hero* strictly limits players to 'axe' activity, *Rock Band* plans to expand the boundaries to bring drums,

bass guitars, and even vocals into the mix.

There will, of course, be peripherals for each instrument, which could possibly be a bit of a wallet buster, but Harmonix has insisted that players can stick to one instrument, and form bands over the Internet with other players. The possibilities for this title are endless. Expect your PS3 Network to be flooded with messages looking a 'rawkin' bass player pretty soon.



■ "For those who are still listening, we salute you"

DVD GIVEAWAY

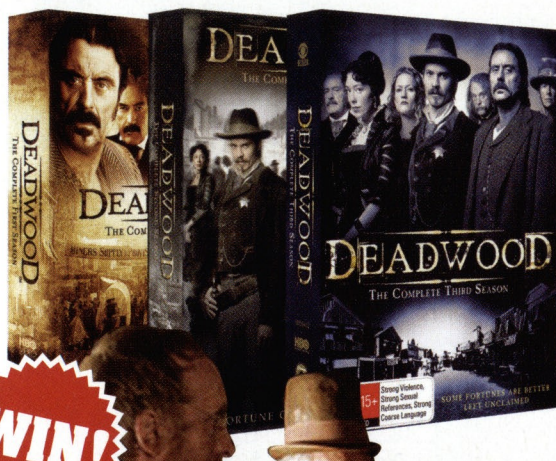
GOOD WOOD

Deadwood is quite possibly the greatest TV show you have never watched. Set in the late 1870s *Deadwood* is a western, but so much more. We're telling you, this show is so awesome it has been legitimately compared to Shakespeare. That doesn't mean, however, that the show is impossible to understand, completely boring, and only watched by lonely English teachers with dandruff. On the contrary, dear friends – it's a ridiculously exciting show with awesome writing, acting and direction. Just make sure you don't have any problems with profanity – the word f--k is said 43 times in the first hour of season one alone!

The prize we have is an absolute doozy. We have five packs of every episode of *Deadwood* ever made. Yep, that's right, all three seasons – meaning that you can use one particularly empty weekend to just power through the entire thing. All you have to do is answer this one, very simple question and send it to us under the headline 'Deadwood giveaway' and see entry details on page 20. The third and final season of *Deadwood* is out on DVD from June 7.

Question: An infamous Wild West gunslinger, featured prominently in *Deadwood*, went by the name of:

- A. 'Wild' Bill Hickok
- B. 'Weird' Bill Hickok
- C. 'Wonky' Bill Hickok



■ "NO, I do not want to double-down on you guys"



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

So, I got a PS3.

Unfortunately I don't really have anywhere to put it. You see, I've accumulated so much crap over the past 10 years in my cramped entertainment unit I've finally run out of space.

Right now it's sitting on the coffee table. It's getting Burger King dust and fingerprints all over it. It's like a scab – people just can't help touching it. I need to get it out of arm's reach – find it a home under my TV.

But what do I take out to make space?

I could take out the DVD player. The PS3, after all, is a DVD player. But the DVD player is multi-region, and I can't watch overseas DVDs on my PS3.

I could take out the PS2. The PS3 is backwards compatible with almost everything I play on PS2. But I'm hopelessly addicted to *Guitar Hero*, and until those guitar controllers work on the PS3 the PS2 won't budge.

I could take out the VCR. Unfortunately my VCR scares me. It's about 20-years-old and refuses to die. I'm afraid if I put it away it'll shank me in my sleep.

I could move my Wii out of the way – but I never bought one, because I'm not five. Man, I need a bigger furniture.

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)

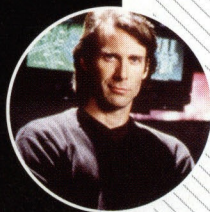
THE MAGIC NUMBER

Shhh... it's not really official yet, but in addition to the awesome prospect of *Rock Band* it's very possible that we might be seeing a new version of *Guitar Hero* very soon. As reported by joystiq.com, a post on the Harmonix support centre site mentioned rather off handedly that the inevitable *Guitar Hero III* is currently scheduled for release in "fall of 2007" in the US, which is spring for us in the topsy turvy world of Australia. While this release date is far from concrete, it gives us hope that we will see some axe-action before Christmas.



HEIR TO THE THRONE

Apparently the upcoming *Prince of Persia*, overseen by über-producer Jerry Bruckheimer, is just about ready to announce a new director – Michael Bay. This could be good news or terrible news, depending specifically on which Michael Bay movies you've had the pleasure/displeasure of watching. If you were lucky enough to see *The Rock*, or the original *Bad Boys*, it's great news, and if you saw *The Island* you might go either way. To those poor buggers who had to sit through the cringe inducing agony of *Pearl Harbor* we say, dry those eyes, it could be worse – they could have been Uwe Boll...



LAYING DOWN THE LAW

Those wise enough to frequent our awesome movie section may have noticed a five star review for the ingenious cartoon *Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law*, a show that cleverly rehashes old Hanna Barbara cartoons to create an entirely new, hilarious series. Capcom, on the back of its successful *Phoenix Wright* court simulators, has decided to turn this insane series into a brand new videogaming franchise for the PSP and PS2. Details on how in the blue hell Capcom is going to translate the show are thin on the ground, but frankly we are intrigued. What will that crazy Birdman do next? Stay tuned to *OPS* for more details.



WINNERS

From the comps in *OPS* #2

TMNT: R Theliam, M Maunders, B Moore, L Lau, A Harrap, D Ryan, K Webster, L Shelton, R Long, S Noah **NFS Carbon:** C Nisbet, B Robertson, G Herrington, J Cho, A Theodore, P Olave, S Katzman, D Lee, T Ruper, H Pine. **All other winners notified by phone or email.**

PS3 PS2 PSP

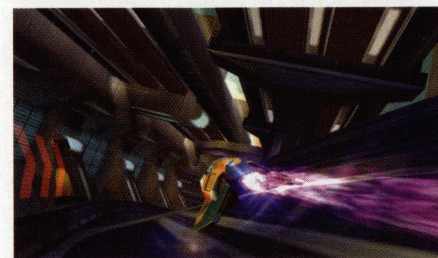
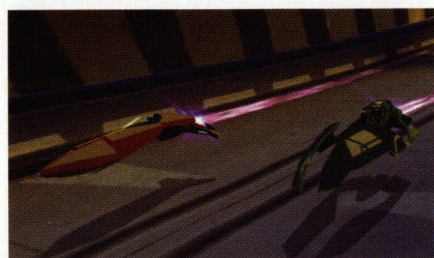
WE'VE GOT A PULSE

One of the PSP's finest games at launch, and one that still stands the test of time today, was *Wipeout Pure*. So while we're all patiently waiting to see what the franchise has in store for us on the PS3, it was a bit of a relief to hear that Sony's award winning Studio Liverpool development team is already hard at work on a follow up to *Pure*, titled *Wipeout Pulse*.

Due for release as early as September this year on PSP, it looks set to follow in the footsteps of its predecessors with well designed stylish new tracks, all new vehicles, and a grand total of seven different game modes for fans to get their teeth into. *Wipeout's* trademark intense, high speed racing has never let us down in the past, and we can't wait to see what Sony has in store for us this time round.



■ "JE-SUS! Where's your indicator pal?"



PS3 PS2 PSP

PSP PRICE DROP?

A price drop for the PSP is possibly looking imminent after those filthy yanks received another sweet deal at the hands of Sony. In most retail outlets the price of the PSP has dropped from an already generous \$199 (roughly \$240 aus) to \$169 (about \$200).

While this is not a guarantee that the price will drop here (Aussies have never gotten quite the same treatment that our American buddies get) it remains a distinct possibility. The fact remains however, that with a steadily building catalogue of awesome games, the PSP is a great pick-up, which could become even greater pretty soon. As of now however, there has been no official announcement.

DVD GIVEAWAY

WIN!

LORD OF THE RING

For WWE fans worldwide, *Wrestlemania* is the biggest day of the year, the culmination of a years' worth of pile driving, body slamming action crammed into a four hour showcase that never disappoints. This years 'Mania was no exception. On April 1st, with a record-busting 80,000 fans in attendance, this show was quite possibly one of the best in history featuring matches such as Shawn Michaels vs John Cena, and Batista vs The Undertaker.

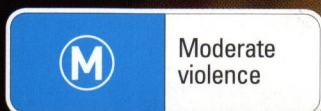
Thankfully we have ten copies of this awesome event, packaged in a sleek tin box set that is a must for any hardcore wrestling fan. All you have to do is answer this ridiculously simple question, and send it to us under the headline 'Wrestlemania Giveaway' following the entry details on page 20.

Question: What is wrestler 'Shawn Michaels' real name?

- A. Shawn Higgenbottom
- B. Shawn Bigbottom
- C. Shawn Smellybottom

COMING JUNE 2007

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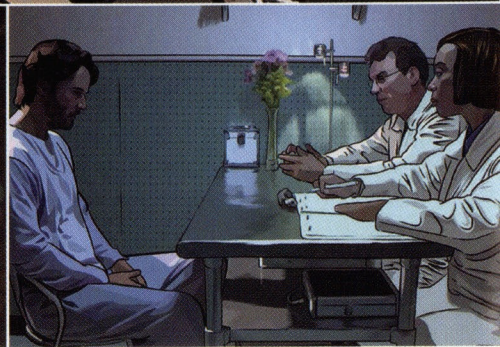
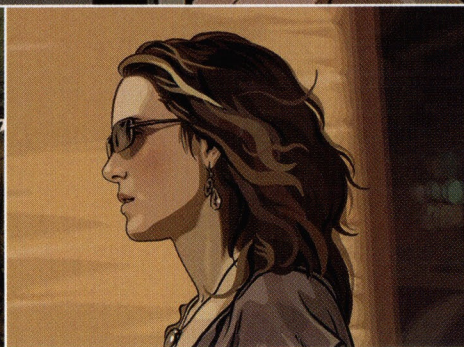
PlayStation®2 PSP™



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THE GOLDEN MAN

OPS speaks to Isa Dick Hackett, daughter of sci-fi author Philip K. Dick and producer of *A Scanner Darkly*



OPS: Assembled from his own personal experiences, *A Scanner Darkly* could be described as the ultimate anti-drugs novel. How much did your father's struggle with drugs touch upon your own life – and how much of that experience made it onto the screen?

Isa Dick: Well, I have to say it impacted my life greatly and when you're addicted to drugs, relationships suffer. *A Scanner Darkly* is really a reflection of a time in his life after my mum and I left him because of his take up of amphetamines. Unfortunately many people suffered in the end because of it. There's a list of people at the end [of *A Scanner Darkly*], both my parents and friends and family, who were harmed by the drug use. I would say it's impacted me personally greatly, and my bother and sister, and I do think that it made it to the screen. We're really, really happy with the adaptation and with the script. Richard Linklater, the director, really achieved what was nearly impossible.

OPS: Rotorscoping is a truly unique visual style; do you think there's a future in the process? Is it true that each minute of animation required 500 hours of work?

Isa Dick: That's what I was told, and I have very good sources! It was VERY labour intensive. I don't know, in terms of the future of rotorscoping – that would be somebody in the field that you would have to talk to – but I thought it was amazing, it really puts the viewer in that headspace. I think it was a brilliant marriage of the technique and the story. People tend to not quite understand it, you know, "Is it animation? What is it?" They have a little trouble with it. It seems to me though, the budget was 8.5 million dollars so

it's certainly an economical way to go. I would have to believe that there's a future in it – it's certainly, I think, incredibly interesting to look at. That's just my two cents!

OPS: In the film both Woody Harrelson and Robert Downey, Jr. play drug addicts. In real life, Harrelson is a marijuana activist and Downey has been arrested on multiple occasions for drug possession. Is this a coincidence?

Isa Dick: I can't really speak about how or why Rick Linklater went to him for or

places outside the US have appreciated it more than certain places inside the US.

OPS: Really?

Isa Dick: Well, the reviews now, as the DVD is coming out – I've definitely seen a shift in the US but internationally there's always been an appreciation for it. It was screened at the Cannes Film Festival and it seems people abroad just generally are very open to a different kind of film. You know, it's a character piece – it's layered, it is an unusual film. I keep thinking it's going to be little bit like *Blade Runner*. You know, when *Blade Runner* hit the theatres

"...it's very sophisticated so I think over time people will come to appreciate it more."

why he chose to do it, but I think he was an inspired choice. I mean, they both were. The character of Barris [Downey, Jr.] in particular was pretty challenging and he just absolutely nailed it, he was fantastic. I have to say, on a personal level, I was there on the set while they were filming and Robert could not have been a more gracious and just genuinely nice and respectful guy. He just really, really wanted to be there and he was very involved. He was just great, wasn't he?

OPS: He certainly was. What's the reaction been like to *A Scanner Darkly*?

Isa Dick: I have to tell you that the Australian press have been wonderful, and that the people have embraced this film makes me personally very happy. I think certain foreign territories, certain

here it was a bomb, people just thought, "What is this?" and, of course, now that's all changed.

OPS: Do you think that in 25 years *A Scanner Darkly* will be held in same regard as *Blade Runner*?

Isa Dick: I don't know about the same regard...

OPS: Similar regard?

Isa Dick: Yeah, I do. My gut feeling about it is that it's ahead of its time. When I first screened it and started to see people's reactions, it just felt to me that this was going to be one of those evergreen films that will probably generate bigger groups of fans and more attention as time goes on. Some of that is because it had such a limited release but also because it's so

unusual – there really isn't anything like it, the whole idea of animation for adults. I sometimes like to compare it to when my dad was writing. He started off writing in the pulps, which were totally bottom of the barrel respectability. People were like, "Oh, you write that? That's for kids, that's not important." I'm not an expert in animation, but it certainly seems like it's the same sort of thing, "Oh, it's animated? Isn't that for kids? People don't take that seriously." I think there's a stigma, almost, that I think over time it will change. I think in that regard it's ahead of its time, because it's serious subject matter and clearly a film for adults, and it's very sophisticated so I think over time people will come to appreciate it more.

OPS: Videogames are increasingly being criticised in the media for blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. Do you think this is something your father would have been interested in?

Isa Dick: Well, virtual reality and all of that stuff was certainly of interest to him so, yeah, it plays right into a lot of the themes of his stories – you know, what is real and what is not real. It fits in perfectly with his prescient mind. We've been thinking for the past year or so of figuring out a way to launch some sort of interactive Philip K. Dick project, which I think would be really cool. We haven't got to that space, and it seems like that that would be the perfect space for Philip K. Dick to be in.

OPS: Finally, do you think androids dream of electric sheep?

Isa Dick: I would say that androids would NOT dream of electric sheep, because I would say the androids can sometimes be more human than us!



Compressed fun

GAME DESIGN 101

Not Just a Pretty Face Part 1: The Brains

It's not just about graphics, you know. We all understand that of all the current generation consoles, the PS3 has the most graphical power. In fact, as consoles get further into their lifecycles, the gap between the PS3 and its rivals will only get bigger.

But let's face it. Nobody really cares about graphics. Not really.

Here's the proof: *Grand Theft Auto*. Nobody would ever accuse any of the GTA games of having cutting-edge graphics. Put a screen of *San Andreas*' CJ next to a screen of *God of War*'s Kratos and you'll see what I mean.

Videogames are an interactive entertainment and much of their appeal hinges on the type and degree of interaction possible. The PS3's raw processing power allows developers to include much more sophisticated behaviours and interactions, especially in terms of physics and AI.

Some examples: in a racing game, the PS3's Cell processor allows every driver to be programmed with a unique personality and to analyse the race to choose the best routes or manoeuvres. In a shooter, the enemies can be programmed to behave as individuals, with their own grasp of tactics, and their own ability to shoot, stand their ground, use cover, decide when to use alternate weapons (grenades, emplacements) and so on.

Now, the other consoles can do this too. But the PS3's acknowledged advantage in sheer computational grunt means developers can model these behaviours in more detail, more realistically and for more individuals simultaneously than any other machine.

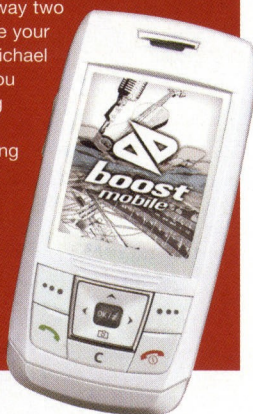
Beauty and brains? Looks like the PS3 wins on both counts.

HOLD THE BONE

If your phone's anything like ours (i.e. scabbier than a junkie with leprosy) you might be looking at purchasing a new one in the near future. If that's the case then look no further. Boost mobile are giving away two new handsets guaranteed to make your current phone look like the one Michael Douglas used in *Wall Street*. All you have to do is answer the following question and send it to us under 'Boost Handset Giveaway' following the instruction on page 20.

Question: Pay as you go mobile phones are better known as:

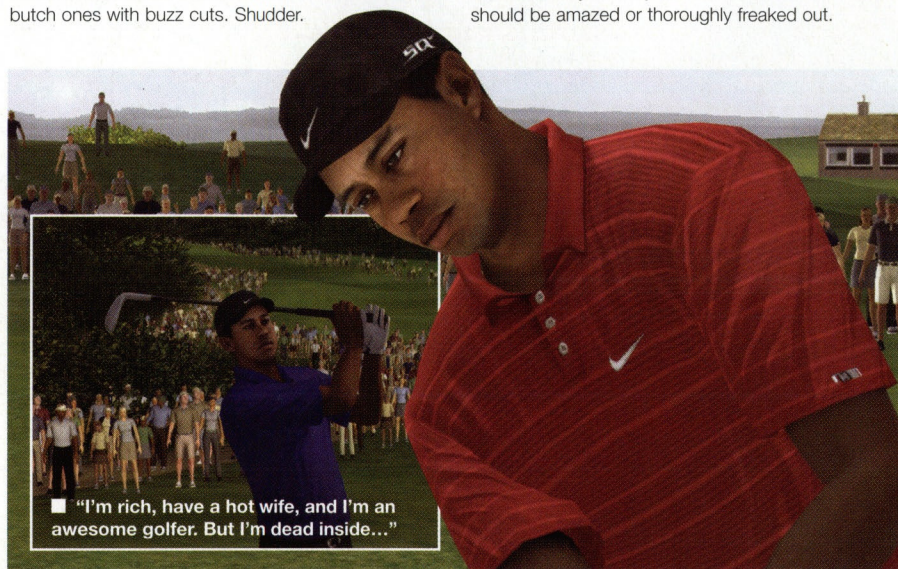
- A. Pre-paid
- B. Pre-laid
- C. Pre-menstrual



PS3 PS2 PSP

FACE OFF

It's a fact. Golfers are generally ugly. The men are usually fat and hideous (see Colin Montgomerie and Phil Mickelson) and the woman's tour, besides that hot asian chick whose name escapes us, is basically a breeding ground for lesbians – and sadly not the hot, limber ones like in the movies, but the realistic, butch ones with buzz cuts. Shudder.



Well thank goodness for *Tiger Woods 2008*, because EA has recently added an awesome new feature that allows you to add your own statuesque mug to the proceedings. Using the EyeToy, or even just a digital camera, it's possible to shape an image of your own face onto existing models via the create-a-player mode. While games in the past have had this feature, EA has cranked it up a notch this time round. After the photo has been mapped to the game, your character will actually mesh with the model to the extent that your eyes will blink, and the mouth will move naturally. Frankly we don't know whether we should be amazed or thoroughly freaked out.



DVD GIVEAWAY

RAISE THE FLAG

You know Clint, we miss the days when you would take out the bad guys with your ridiculously huge magnum, or star in the coolest cowboy movies ever. It has to be said, however, that you've been knocking them out of the park with this directing business. Keep this up and you'll have more Oscar potential than a Meryl Streep movie about a cancerous, wheelchair-bound leper. Clint's latest, *Flags of our Fathers*, is another showstopper and we have five packs including *Flags of our Fathers*, *Full Metal Jacket* and *Empire of the Sun* to give away. Send us the answer to the following question with the headline 'Flags Giveaway' and follow the instructions on page 20.

Question: In *Dirty Harry* Clint Eastwood's catchphrase was:

- A. Make me a sandwich, punk.
- B. Make my day, punk.
- C. Make like a tree and get out of here, punk.

WIN!

DVD GIVEAWAY

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH



Ah Leo, once upon a time you used to disgust us with your girly-boy looks and penchant for garbage chick flicks, but now you seem to have redeemed yourself by being involved in some pretty awesome movies and by becoming a bit 'chubby'. No longer do we have watch your movies and cringe. One of Leo's recent awesome movies was *Blood Diamond*, and we are now giving you chaps a chance to win five packs including *Blood Diamond*, *Proof of Life* and *Syrianna*. All you have to is send the answer to this question under the headline 'Blood Diamond Giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 20.

Question: In *Blood Diamond* what does the phrase 'T.I.A.' stand for?

- A. This is Africa
- B. This is Adelaide
- C. This is sp-ARTA

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Legion Interactive. SMS cost is \$0.55 including GST. Comp closes at 23:59 (AEST) on 8/06/07. Major prize drawn at 11:00 (AEST) on 12/06/07 at Level 8, 155 George St, Sydney NSW 2000. Winners will be notified by mail and published in The Australian on 29/06/07. Authorised under permit numbers NSW: TPL07/02071, VIC: 07/774, ACT: TP 07/00811, SA: T07/962. For terms and conditions go to www.onlinebeachparty.com.au. Helpdesk 1800 653 344.

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WIN!

OPS NEEDS YOU!

REVIEW OPS AND WIN!

Answer this quick reader survey for your chance to win *Oblivion*!

Everyone wins with this promotion! All you need to do is help us help you by telling us how we can tweak and improve the magazine to better suit your gaming needs. In doing so you go into the running to win one of ten copies of Ubisoft's insanely brilliant RPG epic *Oblivion* (check out the 10/10 review on page 82). If that doesn't sound like a good reason to fling an email our way then you're crazier than narcoleptic chainsaw juggler. Pop all your answers in an email, mark the subject line 'OPS Reader Survey' and check the entry details below for your chance to win.

Reader Survey

1. Do you own a PS3?

- a) Yep, you betcha
- b) Not yet but I'll get one soon
- c) I'll probably wait a year or two
- d) Nope, no plans to get one

2. Which are you most interested in reading about:

- a) Playstation 2
- b) PlayStation 3
- c) PlayStation Portable
- d) all of the above

3. How interested in a PS3 demo disc would you be?

- a) Big time, I'd donate a kidney

b) Moderately – wouldn't say no

- c) Only if it had content not available on PS Store
- d) Only if it had demos I could play in my PS2
- e) Not at all – please don't bother

4. What do you think about the magazine's price?

- a) Amazing value for money
- b) I'm okay with it
- c) A little expensive
- d) Far too expensive

5. How old are you?

- a) 1-10

b) 11-15

- c) 16-20
- d) 21-25
- e) 25 and older

6. Do you have internet access?

- a) Hell yeah – broadband ADSL2
- b) You bet – broadband cable or ADSL
- c) I'm getting by with dial up
- e) Nope – not at all

Please submit your answers with the question number, then the letter you've picked. For example, "1a, 2d, 3b etc".

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Also include your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close 19 June. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand. Only one entry per person for competitions.



PS3 PS2 PSP

PURE BRED

System 3 secures Ferrari license...

System 3 has announced the signing of official videogame rights to the Ferrari Challenge series. The deal will see System 3 publish Ferrari games for PSP, PS2 and PS3.

The first title from the deal will be a racing sim based on the Ferrari Challenge series and will feature real cars, real tracks, "true Ferrari racing dynamics" and 16-player online. The launch platform for *Ferrari Challenge* is PS3.

"We chose the PS3 as

the flagship platform because that gives us the greatest opportunity to show off the technology," said Mark Cale, CEO of System 3.

But what of *GT5*?

"They may have Ferraris in there but what they don't have is the Ferrari Challenge race series," Cale explained.

"We've got the rights to use ALL of the Ferraris we want in a number of games that spans back over 60 years of Ferrari history."



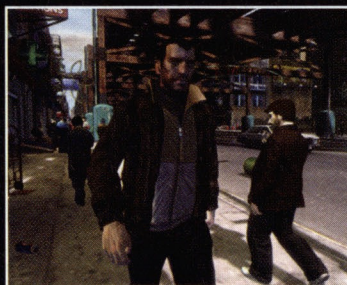
We mentioned last issue about the upcoming Juicy Fruit online beach party at the Habbo Hotel, and the awesome prizes you can win (\$250 worth of games!). There's still time to get involved, but you'll have to

hurry as the competition ends soon. Plus, get yourself ready for the world's biggest online beach party, brought to you by the kids at Juicy Fruit. Games, live events, celebrity appearances – It's all happening at Habbo on June 9. Check out www.habbo.com.au for more details.

THE TOP TEN

Top Ten things heard in the OPS offices after seeing the *GTAIV* trailer

1. "My God... it's full of stars."
2. "Is it wrong that I have an erection?"
3. "Hold me... not there, Nazi!"
4. "Right, someone make a time machine to take us to October!"
5. "I will pit fight anyone here to the death to review that game. TO THE DEATH!"
6. "Can't... express... sheer... wonder... or... finish... a... sent..."
7. "That was like an all-girl-threesome for my eyes."
8. "Play it again. AGAIN, DAMN YOU!"
9. "Is it legal to marry a trailer?"
10. "Someone cryogenically freeze me until that comes out. NOW."



PS3 PS2 PSP

COMMANDER, I'M FEELING BLUE...

Midway's Studio Creative Director Harvey Smith knocked up the PS3's fast action shooter *BlackSite: Area 51* a couple notches describing the upcoming title's features at Perth's GO3 convention. Borrowing the breakability technology from John Woo's coming title *Stranglehold*, shooting an enemy's concrete cover will cause it to chip away, exposing a nice hole to get some shots in.

Your squad's morale alters the game's difficulty. If things are going your way – headshots, minimal casualties, etc. – the team's expressions, voice and combat tactics change. You'll find your men enjoying melee attacks a little more. If you aren't doing so well with orders, and bullets are hurting people, the team will start taking cover more often and blind firing, and will eventually start yelling for help. Co-op will also give you and a buddy the chance to play through the missions together.

Already excited? You'll have to wait for the winter release.



■ "Take that you stupid Coke billboard! Now you're just plain 'Zero'!"



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■ It doesn't matter if you've got a 12.1 DTS THX 6000 surround sound set up at home – nothing compares to this audio orgy!

WORK, REST AND PLAY!

Music to our ears...

Since its first performance in early 2006, PLAY! A Videogame Symphony has performed with some of the greatest symphonies and orchestras across America, Europe and Asia. From Toronto to Chicago, Stockholm and Singapore, PLAY! features award-winning music from blockbuster videogames in a two-hour must-see event for gamers, soundtrack fans, anime buffs and serious music lovers.

In less than two months, from the 19 – 23 June, PLAY! will make its premiere in an exclusive Australian season at the Sydney Opera House, the first event of its type in one of the world's most recognisable venues. Scores from *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* to *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Chrono Cross* will feature in the event that will be brought to life by

the Sydney Symphony, the Cantillation Choir and outstanding graphics on massive screens suspended over the orchestra, cinematic in scope showing stunning gameplay sequences.

American Producer Jason M. Paul first brought critical acclaim to the videogame music genre after creating the first ever videogame music concert series in the US with *Dear Friends – Music from Final Fantasy*. The success of that series gave him the opportunity to collaborate and produce PLAY!

Concentrating on the beauty of symphonic music in games, Jason M. Paul has worked closely with the composers of the videogame scores featured in the two-hour event, including Jeremy Soule (*The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*), Nobuo

Uematsu (*Final Fantasy*, *Lost Odyssey*, *Chrono Trigger*) and Jason Hayes (*World of Warcraft*), to ensure it will be a great experience for gamer fans. The show has since become a must-see for those who love videogame music and also for those who just want to experience a modern interpretation of classical music performed under the baton of Grammy-Award winning Composer, Conductor and Music Director Arnie Roth.

In a recent interview award-winning Composer Jason Hayes said he was excited about the rising popularity of the evolving world of videogame music where high production values in games' sound sequences are increasingly integral to the end product. He prefers to write for orchestra and choir rather than

synthesised composition and believes videogame music is helping to bring a new audience into concert venues. Recently at a concert where thousands of videogame fans came together to experience game music live, Jason Hayes said orchestras will soon realise the importance of playing this type of music.

Tickets are on sale now for this must-see polyphonic, sight-and-sound, live music extravaganza.

Play! A Video Game Symphony

Venue: Sydney Opera House

When: 8pm, Tuesday 19 June.
8pm, Wed 20 June.
8pm, Thurs 21 June.
2pm, Sat 23 June

Info: www.sydneysydneyhouse.com/play

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BORDERS

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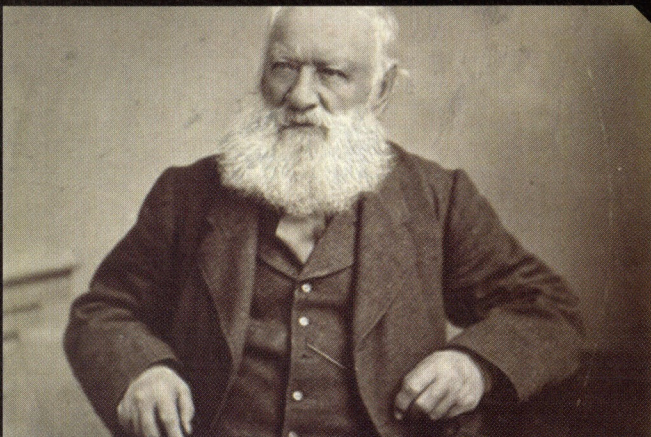
WOW

And all good anime retailers

LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

ULTIMATE GRANDDAD



This is called a C-O-M-P-U-T-E-R granddad" "You said what w? Who are you? What's my name? Where are my pants?"

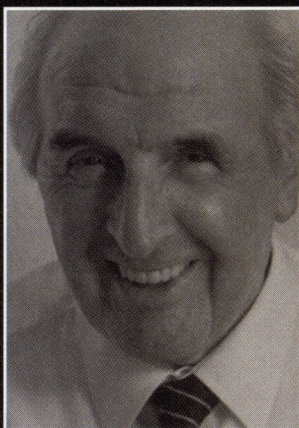


Dear OPS,

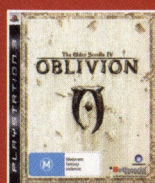
I'm 60yrs old and have been a gamer ever since the PC's first games came out. Then I bought the PS1 and PS2. Now I am over the moon with my new PS3, and so are my grandchildren. I was one of those crazy individuals who went to the midnight launch and I bought five games to kick me off: *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *Call of duty 3*, *MotorStorm*, *Ridge Racer 7* and *NFS: Carbon*. Congratulations on your new look mag, you guys do a fantastic job presenting us reviews each month, I have tried to win one of your free PS3 games but as yet I have not hit the jackpot, but I'll keep trying.

Ron, via email

Ron, we're delighted to hear that you love your PS3; its good to hear that not everyone over sixty sees gaming as a menace to society. And you share your PS3 with the grandkids? That's awesome, the only thing my granddad shared with us was his dastardly baldness gene. Now he just sort of grunts and pees his pants every now and then. Thanks for the letter Ron, nice to hear from some of our older readers every now and then. Oh and guess what, you finally win a free PS3 game!



WINNER!



Letter of the month wins a copy of the brilliant *Oblivion* thanks to Ubisoft!

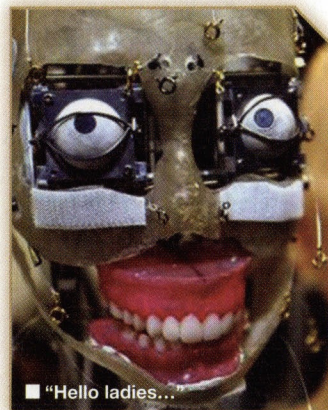
INDEPENDENCE DAY

In every argument I have with my mates at school, or my dad at home, about the next gen consoles and the backwards compatibility thereof, I inevitably wind up mentioning you guys and your talk about the PS3. The only problem is everyone says that you guys are controlled by Sony and therefore I can't use it as definitive evidence. So my question is this; Are you guys independent of Sony?

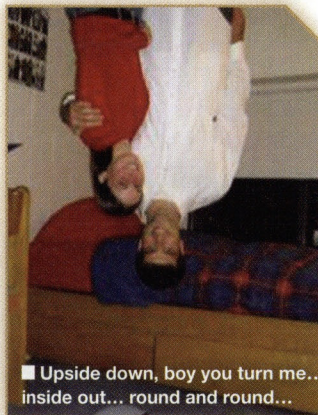
Tom Mikhailovich, via email

Sorry Tom, your friends are right, we are actually mindless robots, writing machines created by Sony. You think the PS3 is a high tech piece of machinery, we're the top of the line buddy! PHZZZT... MALFUNCTION. CODE ZERO. MUST REBOOT. Whoops, just ignore that, faulty wiring. Nah, we are merely jesting old chap, of course we are not 'controlled' by Sony. Absolute

balderdash! And what the hell is this talk about definitive evidence? What is this, an episode of Harvey Birdman? You continue to use our info as evidence Tom, because we speak the truth, and your friends can't handle the truth.



■ "Hello ladies..."



■ Upside down, boy you turn me... inside out... round and round...

UPSIDE DOWN

What's this?! You go away for a few months and the world has gone topsy-turvy. Since when did my favourite mag not supply a free demo disc?! I get back into town, pick up my first OPS mag for some time with it's nice shiny foil cover, and lo! No demo disc?! And to add to the hurt, there's this swish

Xbox 360 mag in the adjacent stand with a free disc on the front, talking all sorts of trash about how it's the ONLY mag with the ONLY free playable demo disc in Australia! My head was spinning. Black was east. Up was white. So what's the story? As a loyal fan, I can't see how this could happen. Witty caption banter aside, the main reason I come is for the games. Is this just part of the metamorphosis process of the OPS mag?

Rock, NSW

Easy Rock... easy big fella. Take a pill of da chill and untwist those panties. We're well aware of the mags current disc-less state. Suffice to say that we're hard at work on the ultimate demo disc to end all demo discs. This demo disc is humongous, so awesome in its magnitude that it will cure cancer, ease famine, create peace in the Middle East, and make Bert Newton's hair grow back. In short it will be beyond awesome. Look for it next issue.

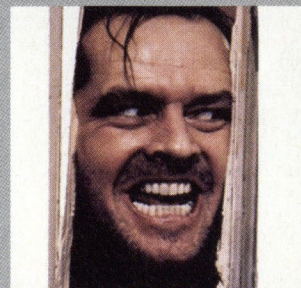
FREAK OF THE MONTH

DRY YOUR EYES

My trusty PS2 committed suicide while I was playing the quiver-worthy *Black*. Having just got home from EB with my shiny new copy of *Black* in my sweaty, shaking, carpal tunnel-crippled gamers hands, I was looking for some immediate alone time with my new special honey. I started up my PS2, but she seemed more surly than usual. Needless to say, my PS2 wasn't thrilled with the fact that I'd brought a new game into the relationship. She wasn't worried when I'd done it before, but this time was different. In slow motion, my PS2 flashed me a telekinetic message: "IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU, NO ONE CAN!" and crashed to the floor. I imagined a horde of rabid zombies devouring my poor PS2 as the camera twisted away. Tears blurred my eyes as I

dropped to my knees. "Farewell, sweet gamebox," I blubbered, "We hardly knew thee".

Wow... just wow. That's a great imagination you have there... (awkward silence). We'll just be leaving now (slowly backs out of the room). Thanks for that... (runs).



■ "Why... why did 'New Kids on the Block' have to break up... they were so perfect together..."

GENERATION NEXT

Remembering the games that first came out on the PS2 and looking at how much the graphics and gameplay on it have improved over the years, it is quite astonishing to look how the PS2 has managed to improve the standard of games – just look at *Final Fantasy XII*. My question to you guys is what kind of improvement can we expect for the PS3 in terms of both graphics and gameplay? Having just got my PS3 and spending the last weekend playing *Resistance*, I was in awe of how good it looks and plays, so if we can see improvement on that quality of game it will be truly amazing.

James, via email

Pretty much James; despite the fact that some PS3 launch games look astonishing, we have a feeling that developers haven't even got started in tapping the potential of the PS3. In fact, if anything, due to the technical

specs of the PS3 itself and the Blu-ray format, we can expect an even bigger leap in terms of graphical quality this gen. At the moment the PS3's potential is limitless, but we can't wait until we see games that do fulfil that potential.

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

WEB WOES

Hey guys. I was wondering, if the PS3 connects to the internet, can it pick up viruses?

Samuel, via email

Very good question. Our understanding is that your chances of getting a virus on the PS3 is extremely low, however, any problems will be dealt with in future firmware updates.

FUTURESHOCK

Will you guys be doing an article on *Ratchet & Clank Future* any time in the near future?

Scott, WA

*We'll have some more, in-depth details on *Insomniac's* newest baby very, very soon. Don't you worry about that...*

NUT JOB

Have you got any jobs I can apply for? I need a job...

Zack, via email

Well, Luke's got some corns on his feet that desperately need massaging, and Naz needs someone to help gobble on his nuts (macademian of the unsalted variety). Any takers? Oh yeah and for the love of god will someone make Phill a turkey sandwich?

FOR THE LAST TIME!

Is there any way to get my previous PS2 game data off my memory card and onto a PS3?

Sean McLeary, via e-mail.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. For the last time YES!!! The PS3 has a memory card adaptor. Go buy it! For the love! Check out au.playstation.com for more specific details.

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

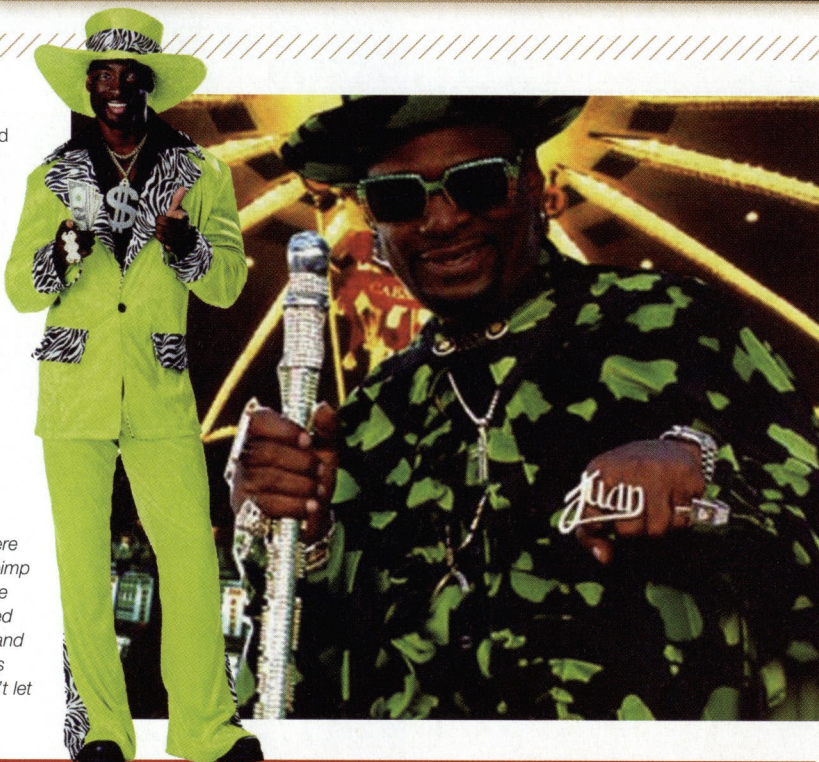
OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
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ops@derwenthoward.com.au

BIG PIMPIN'

So I finally got my PS3 on Monday and I haven't moved from it until just now. But after all this anticipation, waiting, and saving all the money to buy the thing, I am a little bit pissed off. Why? Because I have like 20 free loading friends all trying to grab the controller from my hand and get in on my action. Don't worry though, I keep my pimp hand strong, give them all a taste of my back hand and tell them to go home until I am good and ready which, with the great line up of games I've got, will be round about, say... Christmas?

Adam H, via email

Adam, we completely understand where you are coming from. Our collective 'pimp hand' has been working overtime since March. Together we have pimp slapped over fifty scrounging gamers to date, and that number just continues to rise. All's we can say is stay strong, Adam, don't let those hos get you down.



INSIDE GAMING

MARK SURVIVES AN ENCOUNTER WITH ALTAIR FROM ASSASSIN'S CREED

Mark: Altair... Altair... hello? where are you?! Where the hell is he... (looks at watch) He was supposed to be here over an hour ago...

Altair: SURPRISE!!!!!!!!!!!! (leaps down from insanely high hiding spot in the sky)

Mark: I just made a mess of my pants you idiot, was that entrance really necessary? Where the hell have you been? I've been waiting over an hour...

Altair: Aha! That's just it! I've been here all this time, blending into the crowd with my next gen, awesome assassin skills.

Mark: What crowd, you spazzmo?

There's no one here except us two!

Altair: All right, all right, fine! I admit it, I just got here a second ago, I've been running a bit late you see. You know how it is, I'm a busy man – things to do, people to see and brutally murder. Give me a break.

Mark: So anyway, how's business these days? Are you making a 'killing'?

Altair: Well, you know, it has valleys and peaks – wait a minute! Is that supposed to be some sort of joke? I told my agent that no puns were allowed in this interview... the business of murder is no laughing matter, young man. Any more of that nonsense and this interview, along with your pathetic

life, is OVER.

Mark: Sorry big fella, I totally understand. So give us the goss – who's next on your hitlist?

Altair: Hmm... it's a pretty long list. Let's see...ah! Kyle Sandilands from *Australian Idol*, that guy from *Deal or No Deal*, Eddie McGuire.

Mark: Sweet! Give him a couple of stabs for me. How about Bert Newton? It's about time that bald bastard kicked the bucket. Yeah, and that annoying dwarf Rove McManus. Oh, and how could I forget Jamie Oliver! Please, for the love of sweet bejeebus, stab that irritating, fat-lipped cockney in the neck for me, would you?

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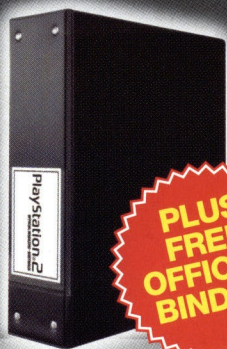
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** REAL-TIME STRATEGY
■ **PLAYERS:** TBA
■ **RELEASE:** TBA
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT SHANGHAI
■ **WEB:** jsf28555833-80604722.com

INFO BYTE

Red Storm Rising, Tom Clancy's second novel, told a slightly different story of a Third World War. The 1986 book featured a conflict between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces set in the late '80s.



■ They get crap mileage but they're wicked easy to park

TOM CLANCY'S END WAR

The war to end all wars?

The RTS. It's proven to be a tough nut to crack for console developers. Overly complicated strategy games just don't sit well with the console crowd. We don't want to be fighting against our joypads to get stuff done, nor do we want to be bogged down, sifting and shuffling through bland and confusing menu screens. We don't want micromanagement, we want action – and aside from the odd bright spark (don't pretend you didn't like *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* on PSone) the RTS genre hasn't exactly had it in spades.

That is, until *Tom Clancy's End War*.

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Long the domain of bearded old farts and pimply-faced tactical prodigies, the RTS is about to receive a shake-up. Ubisoft is treating *End War* the same way as it approached *Rainbow Six Vegas*. Ubisoft streamlined the command system in *Vegas* for a more cooperative console experience that still maintained the same heightened sense of danger and more thoughtful pace necessary for a serious tactical shooter.

It's doing the same for *End War*.

End War will be an RTS built from the ground up for consoles, a self-described "all-new breed of strategy game". This

means accessibility will be paramount and you can expect the production values to be as good as any top tier action title.

According to the developer, as intense as the combat is, the frantic warfare will never overwhelm you thanks to the intuitive, console-based design and interface. The exact words, if we recall them correctly, were that you'll be able to "maintain situational awareness and execute orders with the dispatch of a tactical genius."

Or something like that.

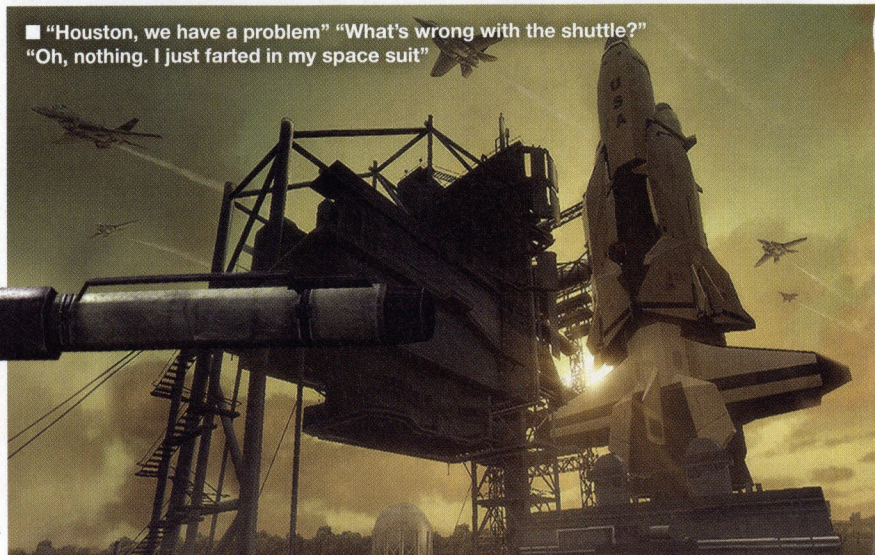
The simplicity will ensure that success will depend on sound decision-making and superior tactics, not the fastest fingers. RTS games have oft been criticised due to the fact matches often degenerate a series of 'rushes' where the players take turns tossing swarms of units at each other. The game outcome could be decided relatively early by one player throwing a large amount of units at their opponent before they've had time to set up defences. It would appear *End War* may have found a way around this gripe.

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

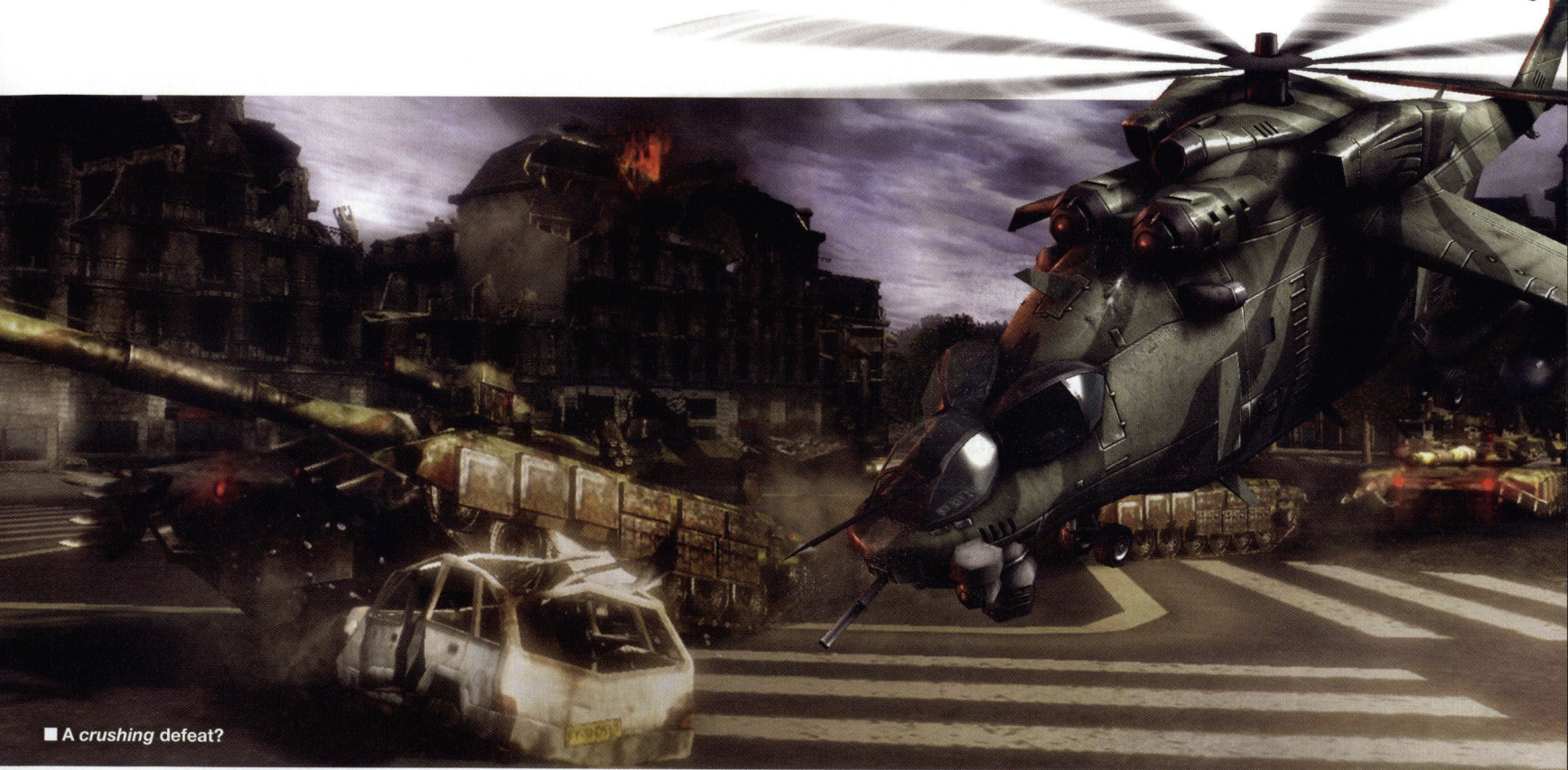
So what's this all about then, aye? *End War*, although not based on any particular Clancy novel, does take plenty of cues



■ "The Americans are invading? Tanks for warning me!" (what, we're all over puns now?)



■ "Houston, we have a problem" "What's wrong with the shuttle?"
"Oh, nothing. I just farted in my space suit"



■ A crushing defeat?



Ukraine, after a Ukrainian referendum votes to apply for candidacy in the European Federation, the US announces plans to put its massive space station, Freedom Star, into high orbit by 2020. This multi-purpose installation houses, among other things, a barracks for three companies of US marines who are able to deploy anywhere on Earth inside 90 minutes. International reaction to this is extremely negative, but in 2020 the launch goes ahead...

It's a complicated back-story, no doubt. But *End War* NEEDS a complicated back-story. You can't immerse players in an enormous global conflict, fighting in the streets of Washington D.C., Paris and Moscow without a good reason. This isn't a mild squabble.

This is World War III.

So how does it play? We'll find out soon. More as it arrives. **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "A chillingly realistic vision of World War III, in the fashion of the best techno-thrillers..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ With the credibility of the Tom Clancy brand and the panache of Ubisoft, *End War* could make the RTS a viable console genre and rock the hizzouse.

WITHOUT REMORSE

Tom Clancy, an insurance broker from the US state of Maryland with an interest in naval history, wanted to be a best-selling author. He did just that on his first attempt with *The Hunt for Red October* in 1984. Clancy's 1989 novel *Clear and Present Danger* sold more than 1.6 million copies, making it the bestselling novel of the '80s. Clancy is also one of only two authors to have sold two million copies on a first printing in the 1990s – John Grisham is the other. It's been an age since his last book, but the clever Clancy has since become a brand unto himself plastering his name all over other blokes' books and videogames, ensuring himself a steady supply of Benjamins in the process. He's like a tomcat pissing on your shoes – "Mine!" How does he sleep at night? On a bed filled with MONEY.



from the writer's popular techno-thrillers. In other words you can expect it to feature a politically charged plot and a plethora of high-tech, yet entirely believable, futuristic weaponry. While the game is set in 2020, the story behind *End War* actually begins in 2011 when the United States and the European Union sign an agreement to co-develop technologies for an interlocking anti-ballistic missile system, including space-based satellites, land-based missiles and aircraft-mounted lasers. Russia, left to its own devices, accelerates development of its own missile defence systems. SLAMS (Space-Land-Air Missile Shield) goes live in 2014, but just as the West is declaring a new era

of peace and security several major oil companies admit to having overstated actual oil reserves. The price of oil rockets to US\$200 dollars per barrel and the stock market plummets. With energy production worldwide slumping dramatically, energy security becomes priority one. Only Russia, the leading supplier of oil and natural gas, is benefiting from the crisis and, flushed with cash, is splurging on all manner of military gadgets and shooty things. In response to the ongoing energy shortage nearly all of the EU's member states ratify the European Constitution and unite as a single entity, The European Federation.

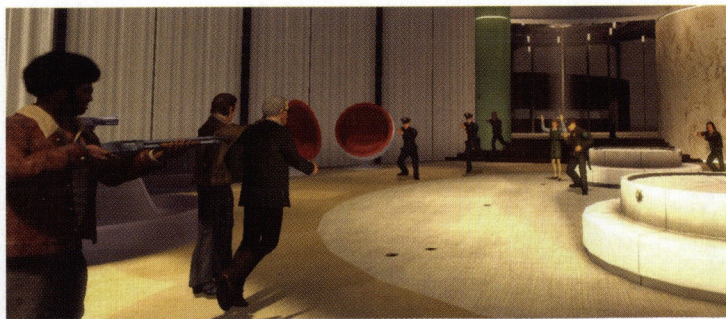
After a brief standoff in 2017 between European Federation forces and Russia in

■ Bah, cheese-eating surrender monkeys



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** INXILE
■ **WEB:** www.codemasters.com/heist



■ "You there, what's the average annual rainfall of the Amazon basin?... " BLAM! "Je-sus! What the hell are you doing?" "I thought we were shooting first and asking questions later?" No you idiot, we TRIED that – it's no good! Come on man, you're better than this!"

HEI\$T

Make money, not love

If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear some flowers in your hair. Why? Because summertime will be a love-in there.

We don't even know what a love-in is. It sounds like a heaving mass of hairy, sweaty hippies grinding against one another. We're not sure. It sounds gross anyway. We don't want in.

HEI\$T, on the other hand, is an entirely different prospect.

(SITTIN' ON) THE DOCK OF THE BAY

Set in San Francisco circa 1969, *HEI\$T* combines open-world action staples with complex robbery scenarios. According to the developers, *HEI\$T* will be a gritty adventure influenced by classic San Fran cop movies of the era like *Bullitt* and *Dirty Harry*. This will be no summer of love, so forget about flowers in your hair. These guys don't wear frangipanis on their scalp. They wear flak jackets. On their chests.

Players will become Johnny Sutton, a career crook back on the streets after a five-year stretch behind bars for attempting to rob the San Francisco Mint. Johnny's

father was killed in the botched heist, but somebody double-crossed them by tipping off the fuzz. Johnny's goal is not only to use his old man's plans to successfully raid the mint, but also to uncover who sold out his father and make them pay for his death. Big time.

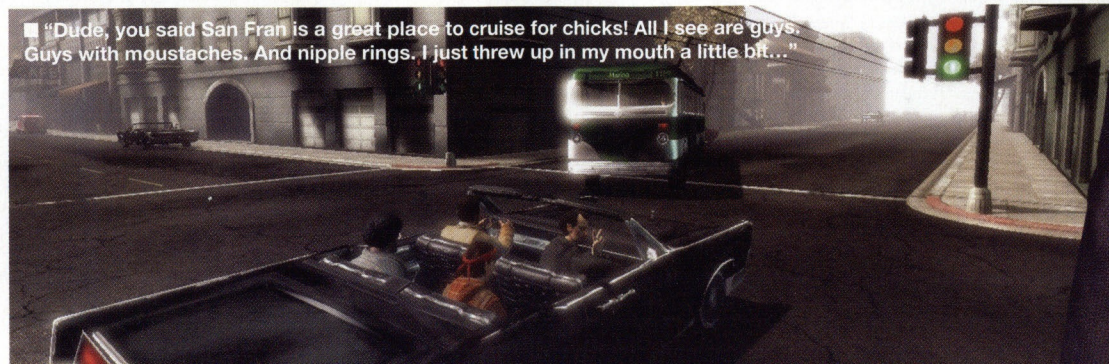
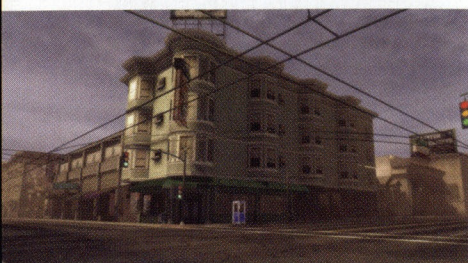
You can't just stroll into the San Francisco Mint half-cocked though. You need to work up to it, becoming the most notorious troupe of bank robbers in history in the process.

For the mint, and also for the other larger scores (like major banks),

you'll need to successfully negotiate a number of smaller missions beforehand. Small-time gigs like freighters, warehouses, strip joints, bars and diners will yield the experience, inside knowledge and important supplies you'll need to tackle the fat targets.

SAN FRANCISCO FAT

Johnny's team of pros reads like a laundry list of criminal clichés, but they do seem



■ "Dude, you said San Fran is a great place to cruise for chicks! All I see are guys. Guys with moustaches. And nipple rings. I just threw up in my mouth a little bit..."



to suit the vibe. Johnny, the mastermind, is backed up by his wheelman Kid, a grizzled old getaway driver. There's also Cracker, the safe... cracker (an eccentric genius, of course) and Crumb, the muscle. Crumb's also the token black guy. He has an afro, which, in 1969, was mandatory.

Your AI posse will have their own personalities and go about their duties unhindered, but they'll also take orders from you. Before each job you'll be able to assign responsibilities for each crewmember according to what obstacles you predict you'll face. The more complex robbery scenarios will involve crowd-control, safecracking, shootouts and car chases, so we imagine you'll need to keep it tight if you're to emerge unscathed with your swag.

HEIST will also feature a dynamic notoriety level that will adjust depending on how you go about your heists. What this means for the gameplay

isn't completely clear at this point, but the fact that there is a notoriety system in place suggests that you may be able to walk the line between charming rogue and ruthless bastard.

We imagine it'll affect not only how readily staff and customers cooperate with you, but also how likely or not it'll be for the boys in blue to shoot first and ask questions later.

Our interest is well and truly piqued. The free-roaming city genre will be a tough one to crack for inXile (*The Bard's Tale*), particularly with the imminent release of *GTAIV*. *HEIST* does, however, have a few things going for it. One, it's not set in New York, which may make it a refreshing alternative to *GTAIV* and the last instalments of heavy-hitters like *True Crime* and *Driver* and two, and it's set in a completely different era.

Vice City showed us how successful this can be, and how much fun it is to ham it up in a different decade.

Far out, man. — Luke Reilly

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We designed *HEIST* so that players feel like a part of the best robberies and car chases from classic movies"

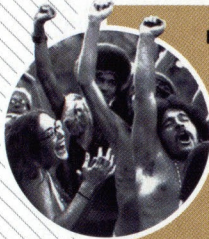
WHAT WE SAY:

■ *HEIST* is one of those games that you really want to be good because the concept sounds so damn cool. Here's hoping it lives up to its endless potential.

SWINGIN' SIXTIES

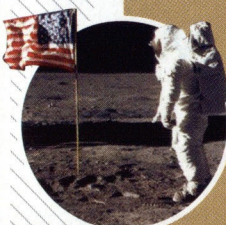
HIPPIES

The rejection of traditional views on sex leads to a sexual revolution. And hippies. Parents and priests everywhere choke on their Cheerios at the sound of kids everywhere banging in the back of Volkswagens before breakfast.



HISTORY

After a brief Cold War cock-measuring contest, the Apollo 11 spacecraft lands on the moon in 1969. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walk on it, pick up some rocks and come home. That'll be 75 bajillion dollars. Ta.



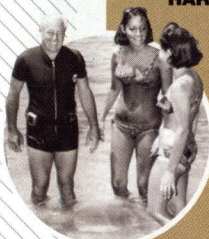
HUEYS

Large numbers of troops are dispatched to Vietnam, sparking worldwide protests. Around 520 Australians and 40 New Zealanders go on to be killed in the war. Civilian estimates range in the millions.



HARRY

Australian PM Harold Holt disappears while swimming at Cheviot Beach, Victoria, 1967. Popular theories include he faked his own death to run away with his mistress or that he had been picked up by a Chinese submarine.

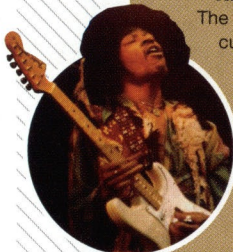


HENDRIX

The rise of an alternative youth culture creates a huge market for rock and blues music.

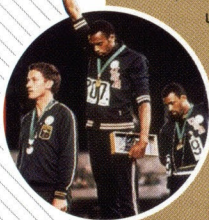
The legendary Woodstock music festival is held in 1969. Number of people who went? 500,000.

Number of people who tell their kids they went? 10 million.



HEROES

The '60s mark an era of political upheaval and protests. These range from extremely violent (hundreds of students and innocent bystanders were killed in the Tlatelolco massacre) to non-violent (the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics).



HEADSHOTS

The decade sees the assassinations of JFK in 1963 and Malcolm X in 1965, the summary execution of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in 1967 and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1968.



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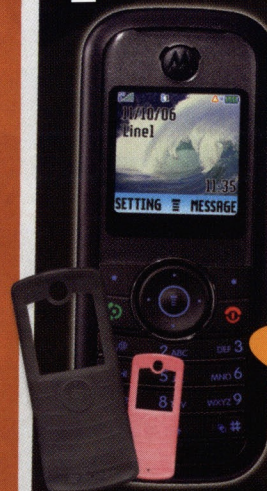
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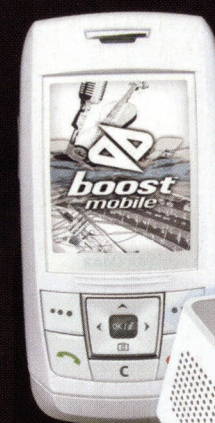
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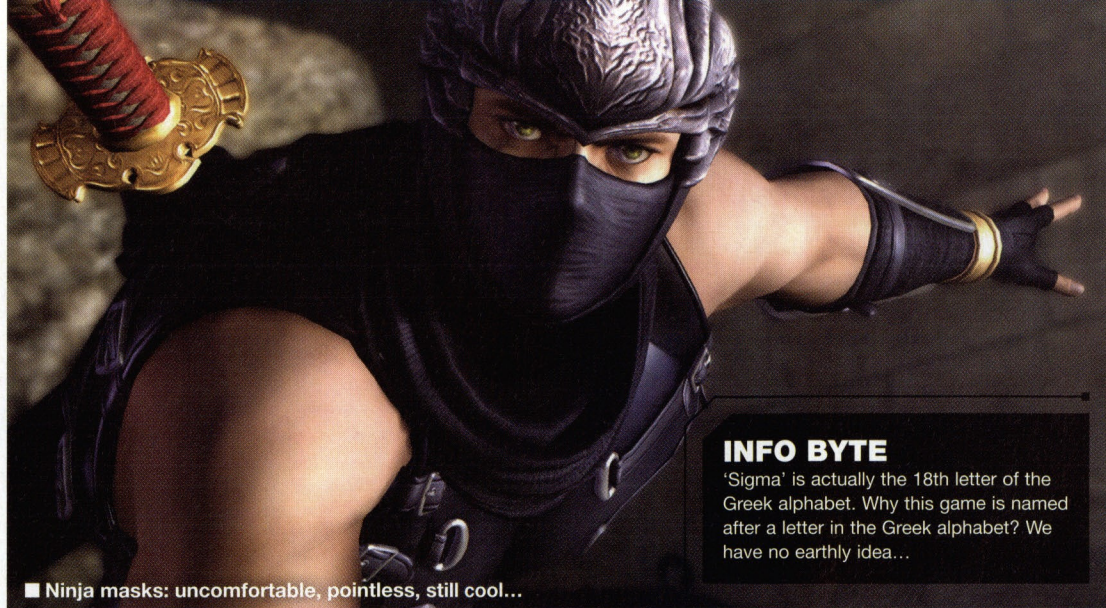
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

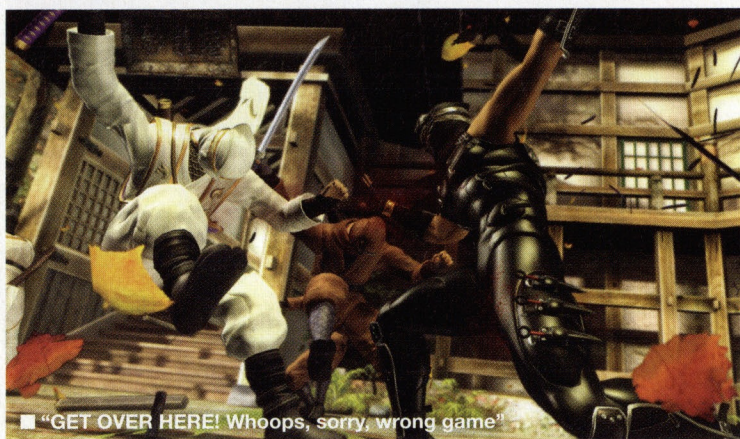
■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** JUNE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** TECMO
■ **WEB:** www.tecmogames.com



INFO BYTE

'Sigma' is actually the 18th letter of the Greek alphabet. Why this game is named after a letter in the Greek alphabet? We have no earthly idea...

■ **Ninja masks: uncomfortable, pointless, still cool...**



■ **"GET OVER HERE! Whoops, sorry, wrong game"**



■ **"What do you mean pirates are cooler than ninjas - take that back!"**

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

Go ninja, go ninja, GO!

It's a question that scholars have been debating for centuries; a question that remains unanswered to this day and could very well go unanswered for eternity: which awesome group is the coolest - ninjas or pirates? We asked around the office and the answer was unanimous; pirates are pretty cool, and are so totally hot right now, but nothing, absolutely nothing, besides possibly dipping your wicker in Jessica Alba's honey pot, is more exciting, than being a ninja.

And that is why Tecmo's remake, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, may end up being one of the top games released this year. The plot of the game is simple and, to a certain extent, negligible. You play as Ryu Hayabusa (of *Dead or Alive* fame) and it is your duty, as the last remaining member in the Dragon Lineage, to recover the recently stolen 'Dark Dragon Blade'.

Despite being a remake of a last generation game, there are a huge number of reasons to pick up *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*. Most importantly there are heaps of new features in *Sigma*, a huge amount of new content, and an entirely new playable character in über-hottie Rachel, who featured heavily in the original *Ninja Gaiden*. Fans can play as brassiere-busting Rachel in three brand new levels, in addition to the 16 featured in the original.

And that's not to mention the enormous graphical overhaul that *Sigma* has received - to the extent that the game is barely recognisable from its predecessor. Put simply, this is no lazy, half-assed HD port. At the moment Tecmo has *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* running at 720p at a slick 60 frames per second. We have been assured, however, that the final product will retain its frame rate whilst displaying at a synapse-searing 1080p. Barely any games as of yet have managed to combine such a high resolution with that kind of frame-rate. If Tecmo manages this, it will be a hell of a technical achievement, and a testament to the huge amount of blood and guts that have been put into *Sigma*.

But *Sigma*'s not all hi-res graphics and butter-smooth frame rates, *Ninja Gaiden* was one of the best gaming experiences of the last gen, and we are convinced that this gameplay will translate perfectly to the PS3. In most respects, it will

vastly improve. The many CGI segments featured in *Ninja Gaiden*, for example, have returned in *Sigma* - only this time they are completely playable. Those that played the original *Ninja Gaiden* will no doubt remember Ryu Hayabusa's first crushing defeat at the hands of Doku. In *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* you get the chance to jump in head first and play through this battle as opposed to simply watching like a slack-jawed yokel.

Despite this, you might be forgiven for questioning the value of *Sigma*; it is after all a remake. We urge you, however, to withhold judgement until you have seen the final product. Make no mistake about it, this is more than a simple port: this is full on reboot of a videogaming classic and well worth your time and attention. We are keeping our ears to the ground for this one, and so should you. **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Our goal with *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is that we have what we feel is one of the best action games ever made and we want to bring it to as many people as possible."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Whether you've played the original or not, *Sigma* could well be the absolute best version of an existing classic.

BRINGING IN THE NEW



New levels and new playable characters aren't the only new aspects of *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*. Tecmo has a bucketload of features for *Sigma*'s PS3 debut; here's one more to whet your whistle. How about dual wieldable katana blades? Yep, that's right, Ryu Hayabusa can chop up his enemies with two swords simultaneously. Dual wieldable guns are a thing of the past - we can't wait to get our grubby mitts on two katana's and start raising hell.



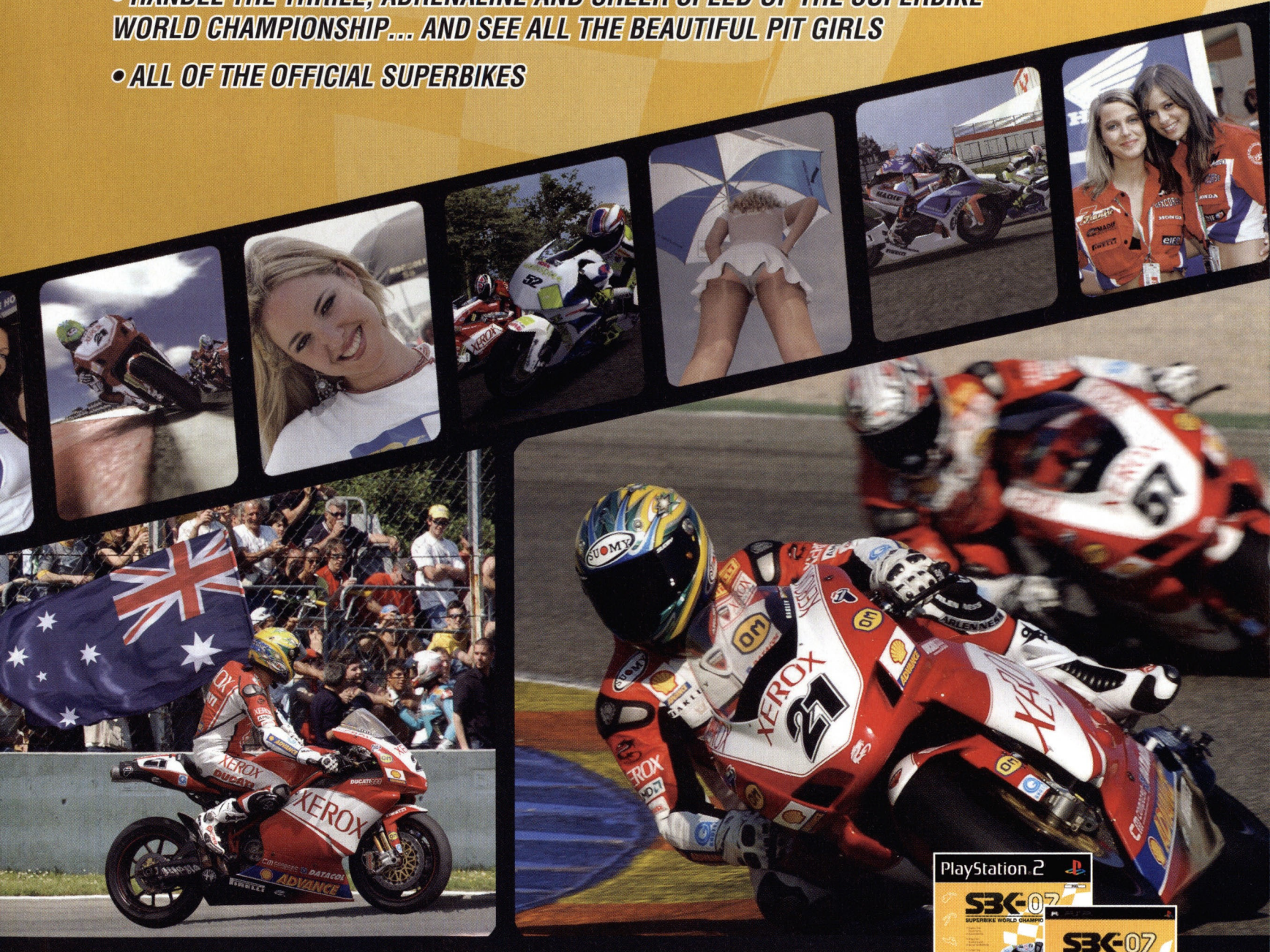
THE OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME

SBK-07

SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

FEEL THE RUSH - PLAY THE GAME

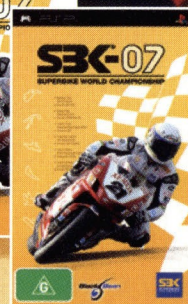
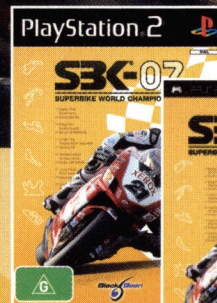
- **FEATURING AUSTRALIANS TROY BAYLISS, CURRENT SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPION AND TROY CORSER, FORMER SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPION**
- **REALISTIC RIDER BEHAVIOUR AND PHYSICS BASED ON REAL RACE DATA**
- **HANDLE THE THRILL, ADRENALINE AND SHEER SPEED OF THE SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP... AND SEE ALL THE BEAUTIFUL PIT GIRLS**
- **ALL OF THE OFFICIAL SUPERBIKES**



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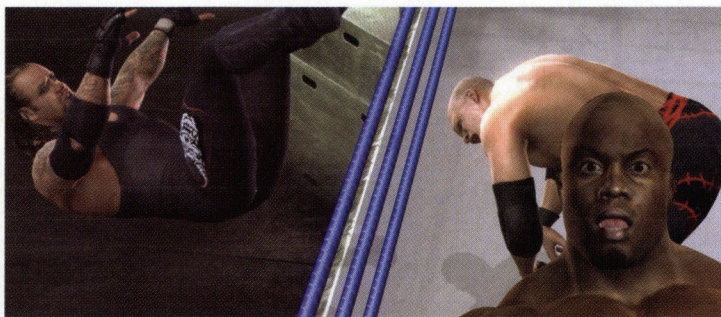
EB GAMES



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** WRESTLING
■ **PLAYERS:** TBA
■ **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** YUKES!
■ **WEB:** www.thq.com



■ "When I said 'let's get in the ring' I didn't expect lubrication to get involved!"
"Well they don't call me the 'kidney splitter' for nothing..."

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

SmackDown vs. Raw 2008 is the King Booker of wrestling games

On the eve of the greatest sports-entertainment event on the calendar, *Wrestlemania 23*, THQ dropped a bombshell of its own. With the anticipation of the wrestling fans at fever pitch for the hallowed event, the latest evolution in the wrestling genre, *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008* was officially announced. Building on their rock-solid tradition of pushing the boundaries of the grappler genre, Yukes! is continuing to tweak the formula to add extra depth for SVR veterans and add extra authenticity for long term WWE fans. While info is

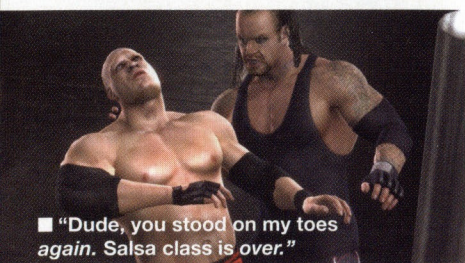
sparse at this stage, we were able to pry some juicy bits of info out of our friends at THQ after locking them in a STFU and stretching them until they cried 'Mummy'.

LEAN, MEAN AND MIGHTY UNCLEAN

The first revelation from our interrogation was that the polar system used in the past few years that allowed your chosen Superstar to fight Dirty or Clean is being expanded in a major way with the introduction of Superstar Fighting styles.

Similar to the WWE Superstars

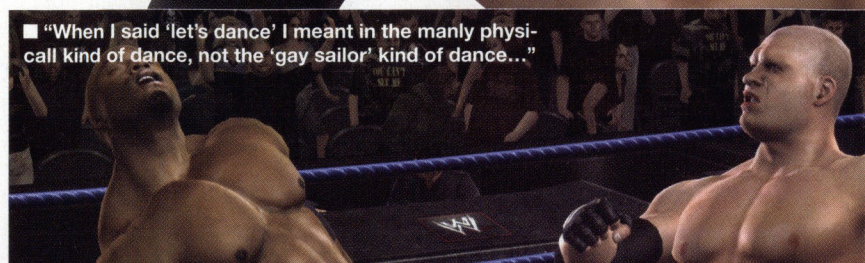
themselves, there are submission experts, high flyers, showmen and so on, each with their own particular abilities and techniques unique to their own style. Using these examples, submission experts will have many ways of stretching their opponents out, causing more damage with submission. Their submissions will be harder to escape, and in turn they



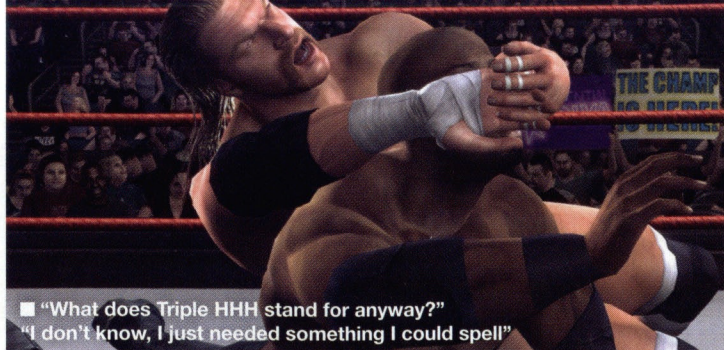
■ "Dude, you stood on my toes again. Salsa class is over."



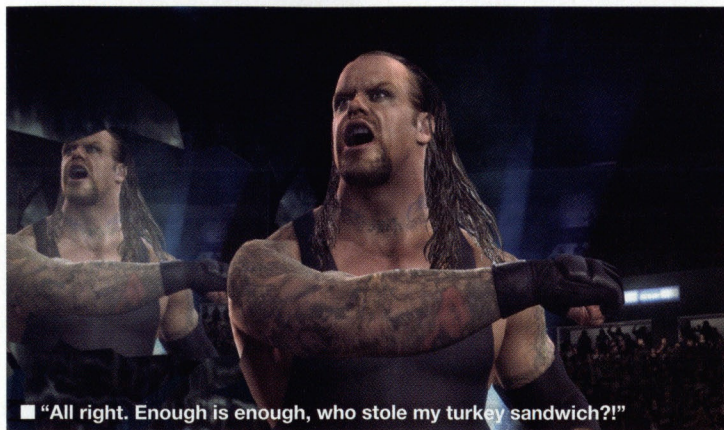
■ Triple H always gargled mouthwash before big matches...



■ "When I said 'let's dance' I meant in the manly physical kind of dance, not the 'gay sailor' kind of dance..."



■ "What does Triple HHH stand for anyway?"
"I don't know, I just needed something I could spell"



■ "All right. Enough is enough, who stole my turkey sandwich?!"



■ "I fart in your general direction!"

will find it easier to reverse holds. High fliers will be far faster than the average Superstar, have a greater array of high risk moves off the top turnbuckle as well as other deft manoeuvres such as planchas, handspring elbows and suicide dives. By contrast, a showman's strength lies in ring psychology, allowing him to play the crowd for maximum response, as well as being able to punk out his opponent with mind games.

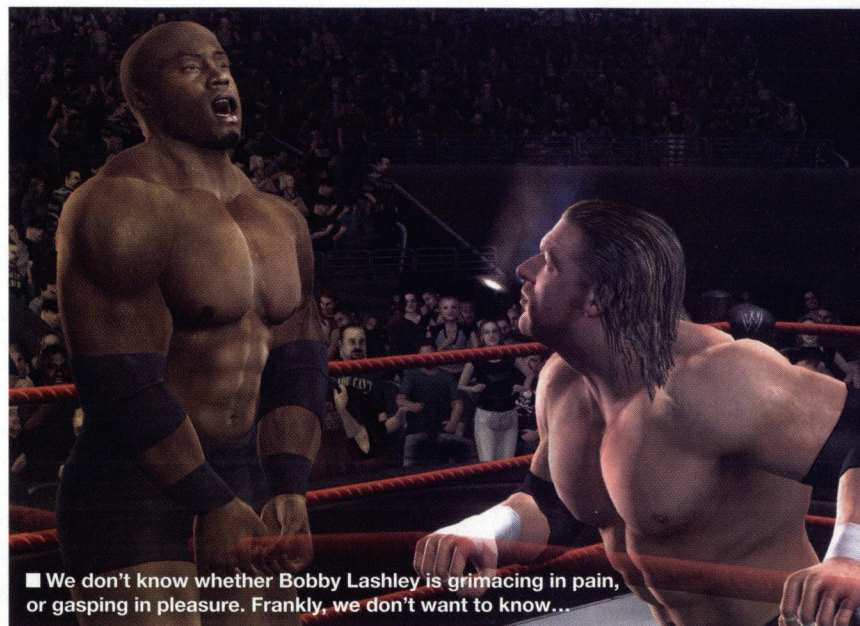
This new diverse approach basically evolves the series more towards the fighting genre, requiring you to fight to your strengths and exploit your opponent's weaknesses to win. Each superstar will have one primary style and one secondary style, leading to a massive number of possible ways to lay the smack down.

THE MAN OF 1001 HOLDS

The Ultimate Control system that added further depth to *SVR 2007* seems to be making another run, as well, expanding

to other aspects of gameplay. The ever popular 'environmental hotspots' that let you introduce your opponent's head to the ring post or the announcer's table in violent fashion will be fleshed out even more, leading to more points of interaction and other options for wearing down your foe. Analogue control will also make its way into the new Struggle Submission system which removes the previous tradition of button mashing and replaces it with a battle of wits – much more like the true 'physical chess' nature of the mat-based wrestling style.

Also, despite the title, *SVR 2008* will also include the Extreme Championship Wrestling brand. While the complete roster hasn't been confirmed yet, it's a pretty safe bet you'll be able to contend the title with the straight-edged CM Punk, the martial arts marvel Rob Van Dam, the Singapore cane-toting Sandman and many more ECW superstars. THQ has stated that ECW's inclusion is no minor addition, and will put the show on level pegging with



■ We don't know whether Bobby Lashley is grimacing in pain, or gasping in pleasure. Frankly, we don't want to know...

SmackDown and Raw. When you consider that this basically increases the line-up by roughly thirty percent, chances are good we're looking at the biggest SVR roster to date.

LIKE A GOVERNMENT MULE

The fistful of PS3 screens we managed to wrest from THQ look almost as if they're stills from a WWE broadcast. Matter of fact, you couldn't get closer to the action without oiling up, slipping into a leotard and copping a chokeslam. Similarly, the polygonal crowds packing the arenas seem to extend all the way to the rafters, capturing the claustrophobic atmosphere of a live WWE event. This could possibly mean that with the advent of next-gen power, we can finally realise those chaotic brawls, madcap pursuits and edgy entrances that cut through the sea of fans. Will this actually be the case? Time will tell.

While those that haven't made the investment into next-generation entertainment may fear getting left behind in the melee – don't sweat it – THQ will be bringing the spectacle and excitement of *SVR 2008* to PS2 and PSP as well.

SVR 2008 will be assaulting PlayStation systems late this year, and we'll have updates as more information comes to hand. In the words of the immortal Hulk Hogan, "Whatcha gonna do when WWE! Smackdown! Vs. RAW 2008 runs wild on you?" Alternatively, in the words of Nature Boy Ric Flair, "WOOOOOOOOOOO!" (Ed – Ric should totally pay me royalties for using my line. What?) **Nick O'Shea**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We are excited about the incredible potential for *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008*."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ We're more excited than when we found out that Ashley posed for *Playboy*. Bring it!

WWE BUNNIES

Speaking of Hugh Hefner's fine publication, with the luscious Ashley getting her gear off for the centrefold recently, that makes three WWE Divas who have posed au natural in recent years. As well as the lovely Miss Massaro, both bodacious babes Candice Michelle and Torrie Wilson have gone sans togs for the prestigious publication. As Jerry 'The King' Lawler might say, 'The puppies!'



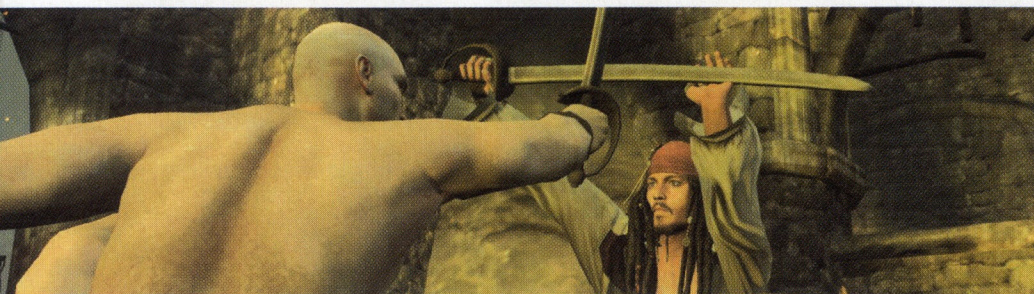
INFO BYTE

Let's just rationalise that the fact that Chyna posed for *Playboy* in 2000 is countered by Sable also appearing in the bunny mag in 1999.

'You couldn't get closer to the action without oiling up, slipping into a leotard and copping a chokeslam.'

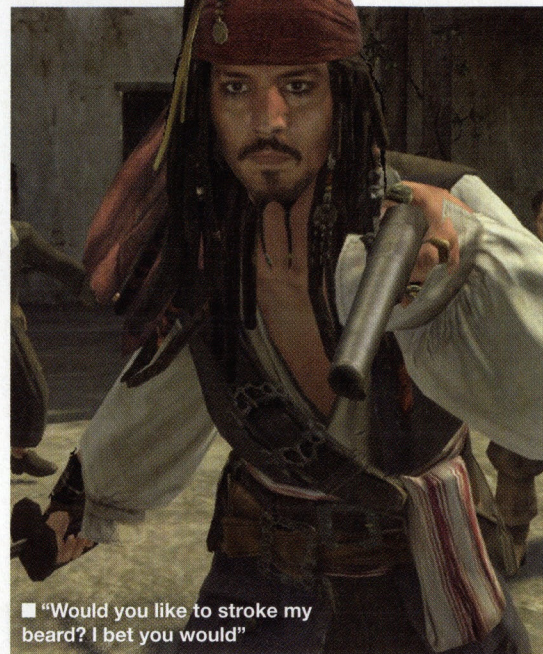
PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC
■ **DEVELOPER:** EUROCOM
■ **WEB:** www.eurocom.co.uk



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END

You don't know Jack



Why are pirates called pirates? Because they just 'arrrrrrrrrrr'. In retrospect, that joke sounds a lot better when you say it (after around eight beers). On paper it just looks like we feel asleep on the keyboard halfway through typing it. But we'll press on.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End is the latest in a long line of licensed titles from independent UK studio Eurocom (*Robots*, *Batman Begins*, *Predator: Concrete Jungle* – the list goes on). As such, our expectations were mild. We didn't expect it would look outright terrible, but certainly weren't anticipating it would jolly our rogers too much.

But blow a man down if *At World's End* doesn't look like a bit of a hoot.

'Inspired' by the events of both the second and third instalments of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy, *At World's End* will see you playing as the excessively odd

Captain, Jack Sparrow, the excessively whiney Will Turner and the fabulously foxy Elizabeth Swann.

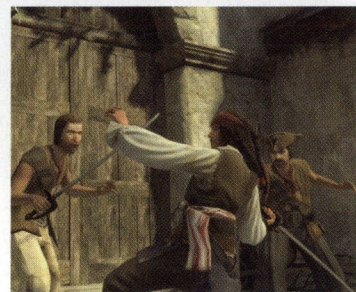
What separates this title from its ho-hum forebears isn't just the visuals, although it certainly has benefited from a suitably next gen varnish. Rather it's the combat, which is far more varied than ever before. You can attack in four different directions when surrounded by foes, and you'll need to do so. Focus on one scallywag too much without keeping the other cowardly swabs at bay and you'll end up with a hardtack up your main brace (which roughly translates from pirate lingo to a biscuit up your rigging – less amusing, more confusing).

There'll also be a few cooperative moves available. On some levels you'll have more than one character available to you at any one time, and you'll be able to switch between them. Bring your

team together and you'll be able to trigger a flashy team combo. Couple this with Captain Jack's flamboyant finishing moves (dubbed Jackanisms, which sounds a little... dirty) and a bunch of other nifty touches like having your trusty flintlock on standby, and the ability to set your sword alight by dipping it in oil, and *At World's End's* combat seems both slick and robust.

At World's End will also feature duels: stretched out swordfights that function differently from the regular swashbuckling. Duels will be a timing-based affair against a more tenacious opponent. You'll need to get the bilge rat on the back foot by parrying his strikes and landing your own, often using the environment to your own advantage (tossing sand in the face, leaping off stuff – pirates love leaping off stuff).

Avast me hearties, shiver me timbers... er, *landlubbers* (and so on). **— Luke Reilly**

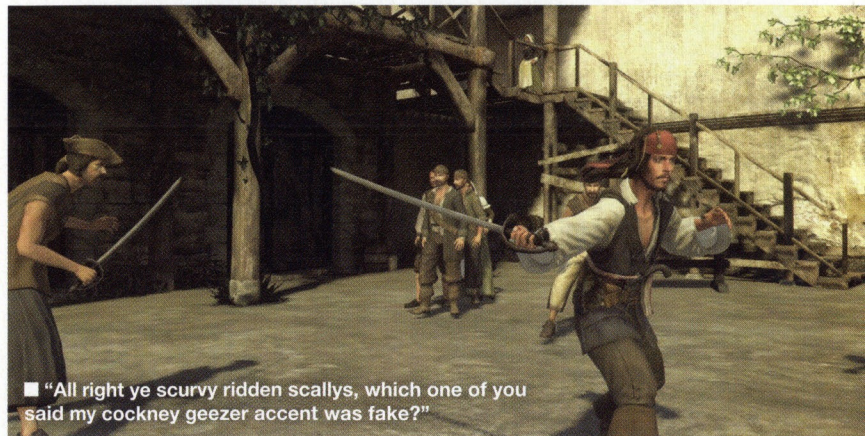


WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "*Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* will be the definitive *Pirates* video game experience for fans."

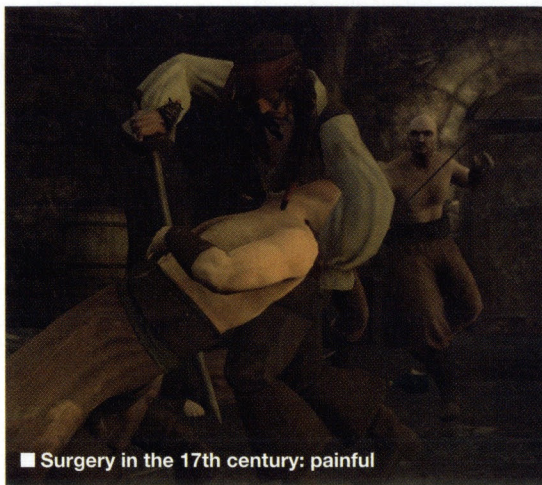
WHAT WE SAY:

■ Unless we're being hornswaggled, it does look rather fun – we'll give it that. Could be a half decent use of the license





■ White men with dreadlocks: losers



■ Surgery in the 17th century: painful

DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER

Modern piracy is about as far from the glamorous Hollywood pirate myth as you can get. Cutlasses have been replaced by AK-47s and pirates these days are more interested in hostages than booty. However, pirate attacks are declining worldwide. Figures reported by the International Maritime Bureau indicate pirate attacks fell for the third year in a row in 2006, but hotspots remain. These include Indonesia, the world's most dangerous waters, Nigeria, Somalia and the ports of Chittagong in Bangladesh and Santos in Brazil.



INFO BYTE

A pinnace was a small boat used as a tender for larger vessels or communication between ship and shore. It wouldn't have been uncommon to see a few men sharing the one pinnace or an old salt tending to his pinnace late at night. Pirates were quite superstitious, so it would've actually been bad luck to have a woman on your pinnace.

SCOURGE OF THE SEVEN SEAS

OPS keelhauls *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* producer Jeff Blattner

OPS: How did your studio come to work on *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*?

Well, obviously it's a Disney property and we're Disney Interactive Studios, but it's only the second production that Disney Interactive Studios, or formerly Buena Vista Games, has done in London – the first was *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Since then we've bought Climax racing studio and we're working on a number of other titles but we started in production in London, about two and a half years ago.

OPS: You've been working on it for a couple of years, how much do you know about the story?

They filmed both of the films, *Dead Man's Chest* and *At World's End* back-to-back – not the first time productions have done that, I'm sure you can draw references. So we got the script pretty early on, having good access to the film studio's slate of products.

OPS: So the game follows the third film?

Pretty closely. Also, since we started working on it in time to make a good game for this film but not necessarily a great game for *Dead Man's Chest*, the narrative also follows *Dead Man's Chest* as well – about half the game's content takes place during *Dead Man's Chest* and about half during *At World's End*, as well as trying to expand on both those stories.

OPS: You've mentioned sharing assets with Industrial Light and Magic, could you talk a little about that?

I wasn't the direct liaison, but one of our producers Nick Bridger was able to work with the production team at Bruckheimer films, get a good, key contact at ILM and get model sheets for essentially every character and some actual 3D models such as the Flying Dutchman and the Black Pearl in such form that we could import them into our 3D pipeline. It's pretty exciting and produced some pretty amazing results.

OPS: Roughly how much of those pre-rendered 3D models is the PS3

capable of reproducing?

Oh, compared to the film model? You know, I have no comparison. The one kind of benchmark that's always used, and of course computing power changes nowadays, but I just remember in even the previous generation of consoles the one benchmark that seems to get thrown around is that consoles are now approaching the quality of *Toy Story*. That hasn't been used lately but whenever I think of film work and game work the challenges are significantly different. You know, they still spend several hours rendering a single frame and we've got to do sixty of them in a second.

OPS: Licensed games always tend to have a poorer reputation, particularly amongst more fickle gamers. What do you have to do to make a good licensed game?

You just need a commitment from everyone. We picked a developer that has a good history with licensed properties, we did technology tests with them to see how they would be able to deliver visual quality on platforms they hadn't necessarily had a lot of experience with, such as Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. Working with their design team and our design team to ensure that no matter what the graphic elements were, the gameplay was headed in the right

direction and continued to be steered in the right direction. A commitment to focus testing and seeing what our target audience thought and just a dedicated team in every position and at every level of the project that's trying to make a game first and a licence second. But obviously the license is amazing; it allows us to play in a fantastic universe.

OPS: How important was the sword-fighting choreography to get right?

We hired the fight choreographer from the film to help us out and give us a more cinematic feel and really work on the two main areas: the way they work with attacks from multiple enemies from multiple angles, as well as the give and take of the duelling system.

OPS: What are you most proud of in *At World's End*?

That's a good question. I'm most proud of just the nuance details that we were able to get in there, like the Jack Sparrow swagger and the detailed look of the characters. The depth of the game, delivering what we hope is a really good, high-quality game that people who love the movie enjoy. I've never been asked that, that's a very good question! ♫

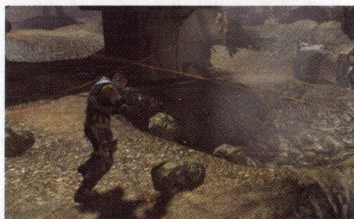
“...the license is amazing; it allows us to play in a fantastic universe.”



■ “That’s it Jack, just keep walking... Pretend you didn’t see him polishing his wooden leg”

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** TBC 2008
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
■ **DEVELOPER:** DAY 1 STUDIOS
■ **WEB:** www.lucasarts.com



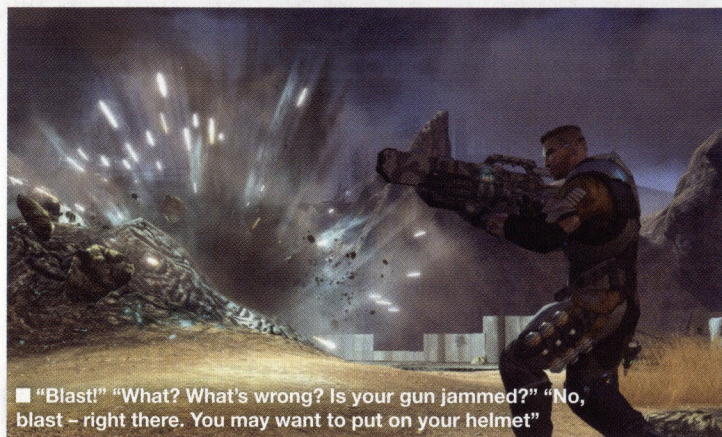
■ "Fire in the hole!" "Are you shooting into that opening?" "No, somebody poured chili powder in my undies - I need you to take over!"

INFO BYTE

Like we told you, *Fracture* is not based on a film. That movie called *Fracture* with Anthony Hopkins trying to kill his wife? Nothing at all to do with this game. Unless he's trying to do it with a ROCK-SUMMONING GRENADE. If so... then maybe we were wrong.



■ "Pffft... this gun isn't anything earth-shatteri..." BOOM!
"Oh, wait. Yes it is"



■ "Blast!" "What? What's wrong? Is your gun jammed?" "No, blast - right there. You may want to put on your helmet"

FRACTURE

"I feel the earth move under my feet..."

GeoMod. It was one of those buzz words set to revolutionise gaming. Personally, we couldn't wait. We had seen the future, and it was full of blokes shooting holes through WALLS.

But it wasn't to be. For reasons we've failed to grasp, developers seemed to ignore the leap forward *Red Faction* and its developer Volition took.

In 2001 we were going around locked doors by tunnelling through the rock wall beside it. With a rocket launcher. And a hard-on (admit it).

These days we're left staring at said door like a dog that's just been shown a card trick.

Last year, however, LucasArts announced it had joined forces with Pixelux Entertainment to bring a new level of interactivity to its game environments, not seen since the primitive by comparison but nonetheless admirable (and all but

forgotten) GeoMod days. Digital Molecular Matter is set to make game worlds more dynamic and destructible than we have ever seen before. We've seen it in action in the upcoming *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* and the yet-to-be-titled *Indiana Jones* jaunt, but LucasArts has now revealed its next title.

And it's not based on *Star Wars*.

In fact, it's not based on a LucasArts film franchise at all - it's an entirely new IP and it's called *Fracture*.

Set in the year 2161 (the future: it's so hot right now) *Fracture* bears witness to an epic conflict unfolding on the US mainland. Years of disease, debate over the issue of human enhancement and tremendous natural disasters (including the flooding of the Mississippi River, splitting the country in two) have resulted in an East/West face-off, and war erupts. A third-person shooter, as Mason Briggs it'll be your job

to change the face of the battle - literally. This is *Fracture*'s trump card. Shooters are a dime-a-dozen, but a shooter that allows you to reshape the terrain in real-time, any way you see fit? We're listening.

Briggs doesn't just destroy the terrain in his path; he can TRANSFORM it - completely unscripted. *Fracture* features more than 20 weapons featuring innovative terrain-deforming secondary fire modes. It'll also come packed with a variety of equally rad earth-shattering grenades. Tectonic grenades raise earth to create instant cover, or to reach higher ground and a better vantage point. Subsonic grenades crater the earth to ERASE cover and reveal entrances to otherwise inaccessible buildings. Spike grenades send spikes of earth thrusting up through enemies like deadly stalagmites. Natch.

We'll have a closer look next month, so tune in next issue. **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "In *Fracture*, players reshape the battlefields - and the fate - of a broken nation. 'Groundbreaking' in more ways than one, this 2008 blockbuster utilises technology only possible on the PlayStation 3."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Looks like we're in for a shake up. Sounds very promising.

SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL

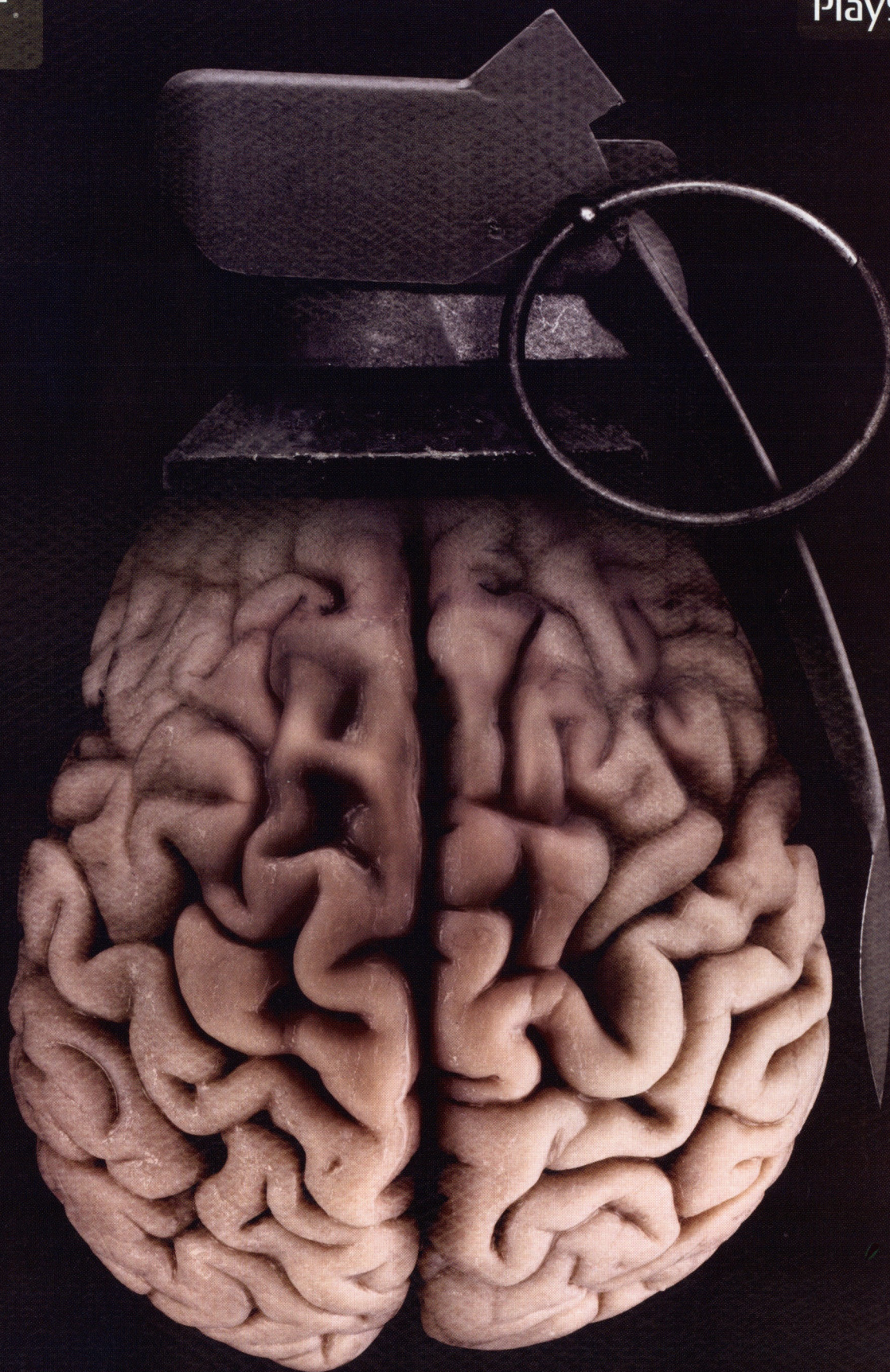


The Great Chilean Earthquake, or Valdivian Earthquake ('Terremoto de Valdivia' in Spanish) is the world's largest recorded earthquake since measurements began in 1899, weighing in at a massive 9.5 on the Richter scale. The epicentre was near Valdivia, Chile and it caused tsunamis that smashed the Chilean coast with waves up to 25 metres. The main tsunami sped across the Pacific Ocean and pounded Hilo, Hawaii. Waves as high as 10.7 metres were recorded 10,000 kilometres from the epicentre and as far away as Japan and the Philippines. The second largest was the Sumatra-Andaman Earthquake in 2004 (which caused the Boxing Day Tsunami). It came in at a respectable 9.3.






PlayStation 2

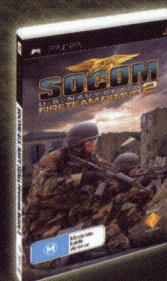


Moderate battle violence

THE DEADLIEST WEAPON IN THE WORLD.

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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** TBC 2008
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** TBC
■ **DEVELOPER:** PANDEMIC STUDIOS
■ **WEB:** www.saboteurthegame.com



■ "The Eiffel Tower was supposed to be right here. Yep, I'm lost."

SABOTEUR

French for "a terrorist you can vouch for"

INFO BYTE

Saboteur is based on the real story of William Grover-Williams, a Grand Prix motor racing driver that joined the French Resistance during WWII. Unfortunately he was caught by the SS and executed in 1945.

Anyone who knows something about anything knows not to mess with a mad Paddy. Irish jokes, taunts about leprechauns, pots of gold, and potato references will yield only bloody pain and the application of many a band-aid. Just imagine then what such a mad Paddy would do if he found his loved ones murdered by invading Nazi dogs. That's the premise for *Saboteur*, an open-world third-person action tale that's screaming to be labelled as anything but another passenger on the lurching WWII cash train.

Forget the allied assault, *Saboteur* sees you join the "Franch Reesistuuuhnce" as lead man, Sean, a lad who's pissed off like a bowl-stuck turd, is out to level the score against

a few specific Nazi bastards. Think of him as a righteous terrorist of sorts, a soldier who's uniform is whatever he puts on in the morning, and whose city – Paris, in the 1940s – is a battlefield unto itself.

It's here Pandemic will once again implement its sandbox level design as seen in *Destroy All Humans!* and *Mercenaries*. Like a '40s *GTA*, Sean will be able to skirt about on foot and wheels, calling on his background skills as a race driver to lose German pursuers through the knotted Parisian streets. Considering that Pandemic is trying to map out ALL of Paris, as well as the German-controlled mountains, this open design may lead to the game's races dwarfing anything yet conceived.

Not that Sean will spend

all his time chuffing off like a blouse. While it's looking unlikely that he'll have a broad arsenal of real-world weapons, Sean will start off with some capable fisticuffs before gaining access to basic weapon varieties, rifles and explosives as he ascends the underground ladder of success.

That said, many situations in the game will see you completely outgunned, so rather than try to encourage head-on engagement against a swagger of knob-helmeted Jerries, Pandemic is out to ensure the evasion aspect of the game keeps its knees lifted high. Unlike other stealth games that require your character to hide for lengthy amounts of time when sprung, a quick hike up to a rooftop or into one of the game's few internal environments will shake the enemy off your tail faster than a fart in the wind, allowing you to get back to

whatever naughtiness you were previously embarking on.

Featuring a new take on the horror that went down in Europe in the '40s, ballsy characters, a massive recreation of Paris' sprawling cityscape, and some edgy style choices, *Saboteur* is out to spin an evocative yarn in a fresh way come its release some time next year. Sounds like it'll be worth a stiff salute. **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

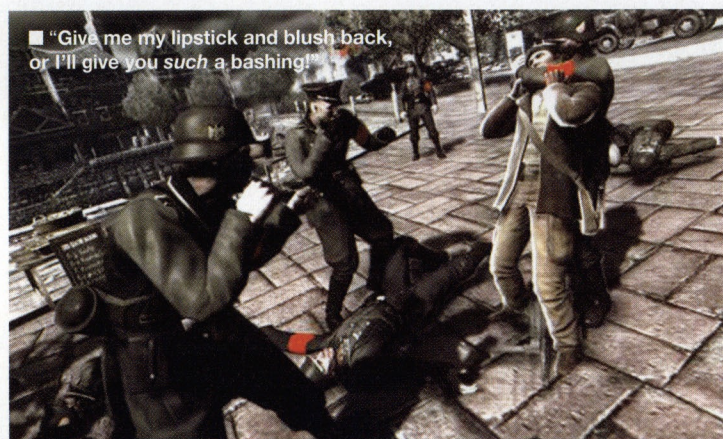
■ "a larger than life tale set in the era of WWII"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Stealth games can be hit and miss. If they can balance out the combat and evasion we'll have a winner.



■ "NO-ONE steals me lucky charms!"



■ "Give me my lipstick and blush back, or I'll give you such a bashing!"

SIN CITY INFLUENCES THE CITY OF LOVE

One of the more noteworthy elements of *Saboteur* is how the visuals in areas of the city change as Sean successfully completes missions there, also prompting the civilians in that part to become increasingly optimistic and willing to rebel. Things start off in the *Sin City*-inspired black and white, save for the red found in blood and the Nazi swastika, but then bloom into full colour as the good times roll. Taking to a high point in the game world, players will be able to see different areas transitioning from black and white to glowing colour from one area to the next.



■ Zeppelins: the giant nipples of the sky...



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

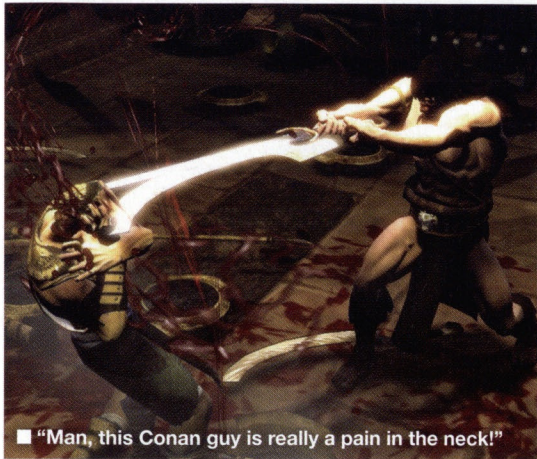
■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** TBC 2008
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** NIHILISTIC
■ **WEB:** www.nihilistic.com



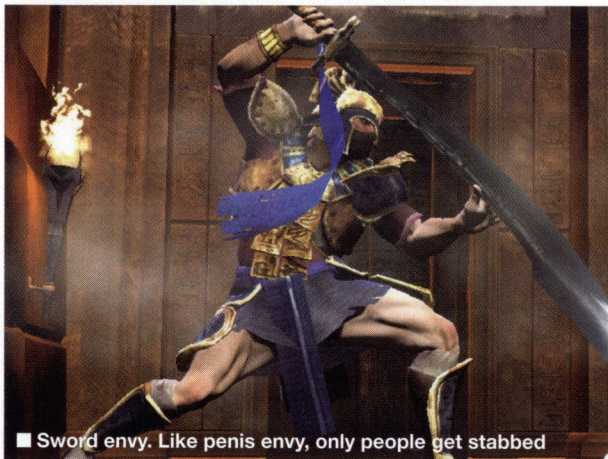
■ "That's a weight off *his* shoulders! Haaa hahaha!"



■ "OOOFFF - right in the meat and two veg!"



■ "Man, this Conan guy is really a pain in the neck!"



■ Sword envy. Like penis envy, only people get stabbed



CONAN

"The riddle... of steel"

What is best in life? To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women? According to Conan it is.

Now before you choke on your Burger Rings in excitement, *Conan* is NOT based on the Schwarzenegger films of the '80s - so you can shelve that dream you had about wearing the lubed-up pecs of the seven times Mr. Olympia (which is weird, by the way). *That* Conan is no longer a barbarian. He's a Republican. This Conan is actually based on the original Conan stories. The legend of Conan didn't begin on the silver screen with everybody's favourite Austrian - rather it began 75 years ago, created by American writer

Robert E. Howard in 1932 in a series of fantasy stories in *Weird Tales*.

Conan will allow you to don the loincloth of the bulging Cimmerian as he hacks and slashes his way through a variety of unique and dangerous realms within the Hyborian world. The demo we were privy to saw Conan pummel his way through a bunch of different locales, from bleak tombs to lush rainforest, even the decks of a flailing ship being attacked by a giant squid. The squid battle was the best and most engaging level at this point. A fairly unapologetic rip-off of the Hydra battle in *God of War* and the Kraken confrontation in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, the squid showdown was nonetheless a bit of a hoot. Not only

did Conan need to contend with tree trunk-sized tentacles thrashing around the deck, he also had to dispatch crew members who'd become squid-zombies when ol' calamari face shot squid-zombie ink all over them.

The visuals, although a little workmanlike at this point, show plenty of promise and the blood effects are especially gnarly. It's the combat, however, that proved to be most impressive. Conan's robust combat system will feature over 100 different moves for you to master, and to avoid you becoming complacent and relying on one of two useful attacks to get by Nihilistic is aiming to have dynamic opponents who'll force you to mix up your routine. You can prise extra weapons out of your enemies' hands (living or dead) and dual wield all manner of swords, clubs and pointed sticks, and our favourite move was where Conan, with a sword in each hand, sliced the neck of one hapless goon from both sides in a scissor motion, lopping off his head in a geyser of gore.

More soon. ➤ **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...a story of epic brutality, sheer evil and visceral combat within an expansive fantasy setting."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ There's some way to go yet, but it has the potential to sway its fair share of punters in the absence of a *God of War III*.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The following Conans will not be appearing in *Conan*. Sorry.

Conan the Librarian

Appears in a brief segment of the Weird Al Yankovic film *UHF* slicing a patron in twain for returning an overdue book and mocking another who can't locate the tome of his choice. "Don't you know the Dewey Decimal System?"



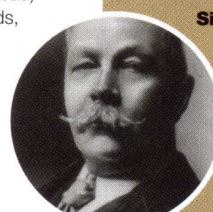
Conan the O'Brienian

Put Conan O'Brien's head on Arnold Schwarzenegger's body and he looks like a woman. THAT'S seriously worrying. The moral? Everyone is a woman compared to Schwarzenegger. Even men. Don't bend over in California.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Sooo... this is the bloke who created Sherlock Holmes, right? He's Scottish, isn't he? Cool... errr... seriously though, he's just here to bolster the numbers. We pretty much ran out of steam with Conan the O'Brienian. Sigh.



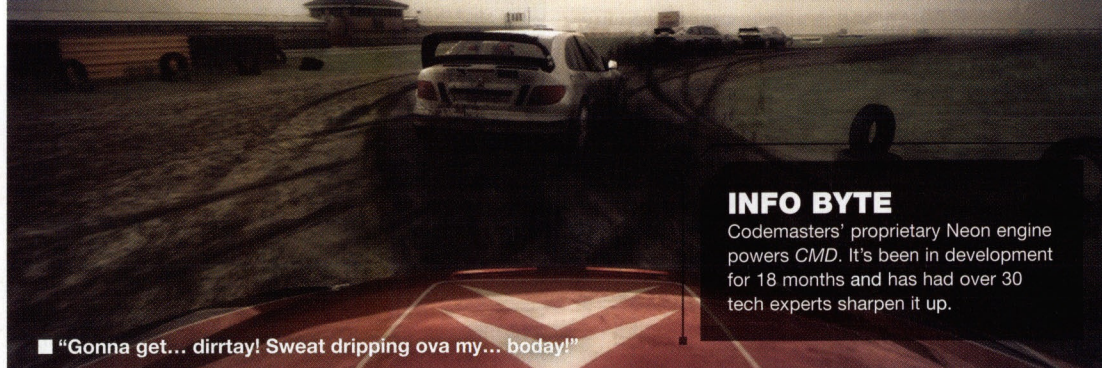
■ "Lovely party. Pity I wasn't invited"

INFO BYTE

Conan creator Robert E. Howard shot himself in the head. He died eight hours later.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** JULY 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
■ **WEB:** <http://au.codemasters.com>



INFO BYTE

Codemasters' proprietary Neon engine powers *CMD*. It's been in development for 18 months and has had over 30 tech experts sharpen it up.

COLIN McRAE DIRT

Driving on roads is for pussies

Disclaimer: This article is not about McRae ramrodding some 17-year-old schoolgirl in his tyre shed, smuggling "H" in the back of his beefed up Celica, or covering up a previous career as an estate agent. That's not the sort of "dirt" we're talking about. Nope, Colin's mobile cash printing station is setting up shop on the PS3, towing with it a bunch of mud-gutting options and extras out to lure wannabe rally drivers into its fold like babies to a honeyed nipple.

You may have noticed that a tadpole-like fleet of rally games were released on the PlayStation 2. With such over saturation is it any wonder the genre now squeezes out a Mexican wave of apathy from the majority of gamers who've muddled every flap and died on every hairpin? *DIRT* doesn't want to cause another shoulder shrug. *DIRT* wants to turn your head. *DIRT* wants to be a head-on bollock stomper of a racer – and from what we've seen so far, it's holding to its track.

We've been privileged to jump into

the cradle of ball sweat that is the newest preview version of *DIRT*, and have come away with our eyes twinkling and fingers itching. *DIRT* never looked better. While there are detailed car models in *Gran Turismo HD* and plenty of flying brown in *MotorStorm*, there hasn't been a title that combines the realistic effects of the former with the chaos of the latter – until now.

Most striking is the dynamic lighting that bounces and jags off the car's body as you roll over a litany of rocky passes and right-angle turns. Combined with the constant mud storm that recolours your car, the visuals are always on the kick. On top of that, imagine a roadside lined with patches of wind-swayed flora, a hawkish draw distance, and the flurry of opposing cars as they tear up the path ahead, and you'll realise these are the kind of graphics daydreaming road abusers have been lusting after for decades.

As stated, it seems that free thinkers have usurped the solitary confinement school of rally driving. Recognising that the

stereotyped teen male gamer does enough things on his own, four new racing modes have been introduced that miraculously hold more than one set of wheels on the track at a time. Crossover sees you take on one other challenger on a parallel lane track that features a connecting segment where each car crosses over into the others domain halfway through a lap; Rallycross sees a pack of racers compete in a stadium arena featuring road and dirt; Rally Raid is the equivalent to *MotorStorm* with boundless desert tracks; while CORR or the Championship Off Road Racing is similar to Rally Raid except you're in

buggy-like crash carts. Each mode was as grotty, as gut-pumpingly dirty, as the next and each was top fun.

Watch this space for more *DIRT* as it becomes available. **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

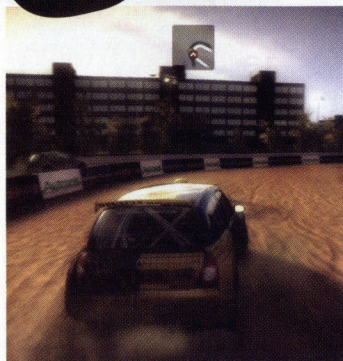
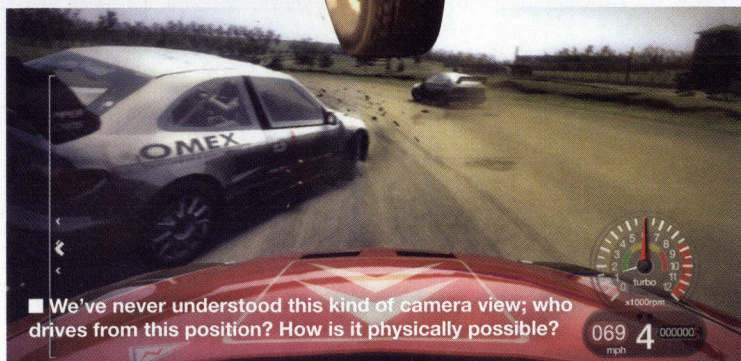
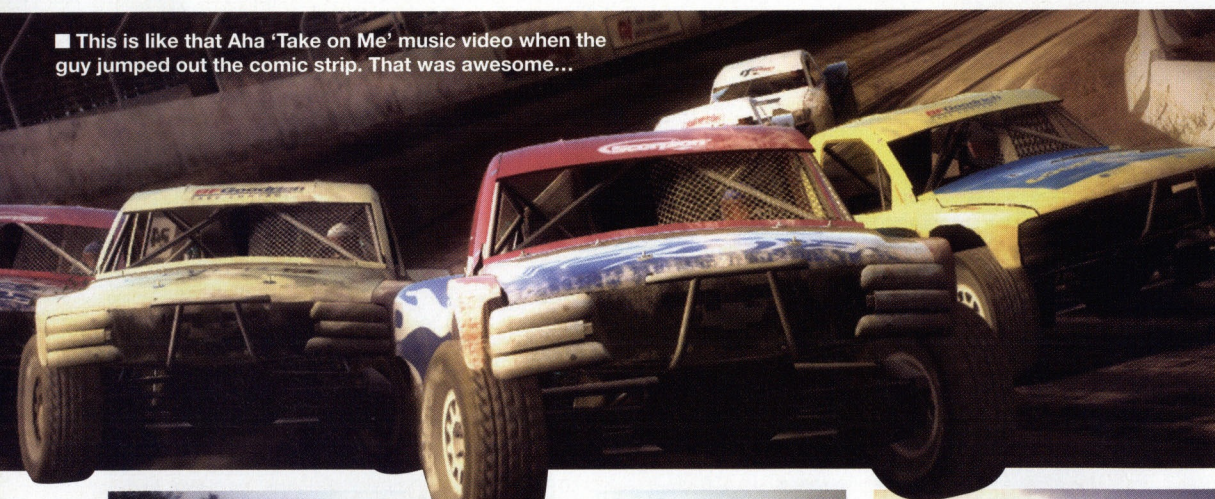
■ "Set to be the most diverse and exhilarating off-road racing experience ever."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Like Paris, Lindsay, and Nicole – filth never looked so good.



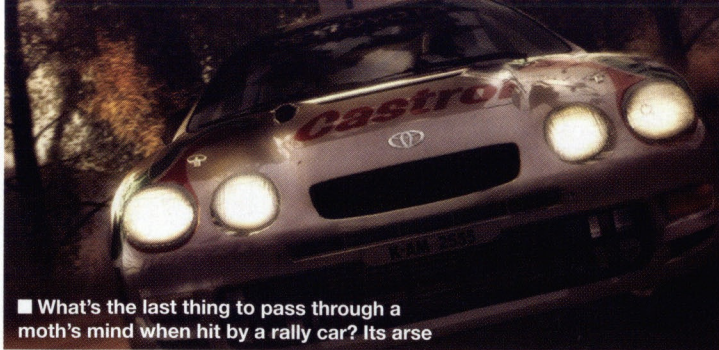
■ This is like that Aha 'Take on Me' music video when the guy jumped out the comic strip. That was awesome...



THE DIRT ON COLIN

Since the inception of the Colin McRae rally games, the man himself has become something of an enigma – the Keyser Söze of gamedom. After googling the bloke it turns out that he does in fact exist and is not some fictitious cash cow. We tried to dig up some real dirt about this guy, maybe a bad gambling habit, some sort of sexual vice, but alas all we could find out is that he's into "daredevil" sports like white-water rafting and helicopter flying, and that he's looking to make a comeback into the top tier of the sport as his trophy cabinet isn't quite crowded enough.





■ What's the last thing to pass through a moth's mind when hit by a rally car? Its arse

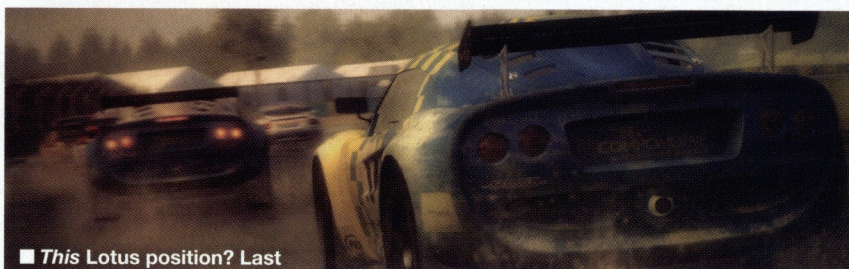


■ "Did we hit something?" (awkward silence)

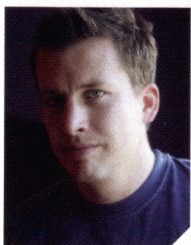
"...force feedback is certainly something that we will be looking into adopting on the PS3 if we can."



■ "We gonna roll this truckin' convoy 'cross the USA"



■ This Lotus position? Last



KING OFF THE ROAD

Codies producer Alex Grimbley dishes the DIRT on Colin McRae's latest mudslinger

OPS: Recently the *Colin McRae* series faced stiff competition

from *Evolution's* *WRC* franchise, and now *MotorStorm* is busy blowing people's minds. For those in the know it's apples and pears, but for the more casual pundit what does *DIRT* offer over arguably its closest competitor?

AG: If you already love the traditional *Colin* series gameplay then you'll not be disappointed by what's on offer in *DIRT*. The game goes far beyond the traditional point-to-point style events, with a fresh design that opens the game's appeal to a far wider and more diverse audience. What we are offering is the opportunity to compete in a variety of off-road motorsport, both against the clock and AI opposition on circuits around the globe.

OPS: What exactly is it about the Neon engine that is making *DIRT* such a cutting-edge racing experience?

AG: Our aim from the start has been to make every element of the game next gen. Neon gives us so much more scope than an update of an existing engine would have allowed. The result is that we can produce some amazing effects. Metal will crumple, cars will wrap round trees, glass will smash and everything in the environment you can collide with will be destroyed in a realistic way. Small trees snap and bend, grass can be flattened, wood splintered and stone smashed.

We've also created a fantastic wind

system that will be applied to every track. Everything you see in the environment will be affected by the wind; exhaust smoke, trees and foliage, spectators' flags, trackside flags. The car will even create a wake that will affect everything it passes including flags and foliage.

OPS: What other course types will feature in *DIRT* besides traditional point-to-point stages?

AG: We have all three official CORR tracks in the USA and three officially licensed rally cross circuits from Europe. Also included is the 12.4-mile Pikes Peak international hill climb in Colorado plus the Windy Point Hill Climb in Arizona. We also have another 36 rally stages from around the world in such countries as Japan, UK, Italy, Germany, Spain and Australia covering all sorts of rally surfaces. We also have three rally raid off road circuits around the Otay Valley region near San Diego plus an additional six [international] super special stages.

For rally cross we have included the most exciting official rally cross circuits from Europe, Croft in England, Knockhill in Scotland and Essay in France.

Rally Cross blends the excitement of off road with traditional track racing with 500bhp modified cars such as Audi TTs.

OPS: How much does the car and track damage affect gameplay?

AG: We've written a new damage system from scratch and the results are looking superb. The new system allows us to scrape, crumple, bend and twist cars to levels never before seen. This means that

damage will range from a few paintwork scratches right the way up to literally being able to wrap the car around a tree or other solid object.

OPS: Rallying is so tough because no surface is ever the same. How does Neon help you mirror this in *DIRT*?

AG: *DIRT* will have the most fun, accessible and authentic car handling of the series to date. One of the key changes that you'll notice is the fact that Neon has allowed us to model every nuance of car handling, including modeling the effects that each surface has on the car and the effects of damage on the car's handling. Additionally, our dedicated car handling team has researched each car and visited owners of the cars in-game to ensure that no two cars feel the same.

OPS: The audio was a highlight for us. How important is the sound in *DIRT*?

AG: The audio in *DIRT* is vital to the gameplay experience and we wanted the audio to sound dynamic and lively all the way from the front-end through the actual gameplay. We paid a huge amount of detail, not only to the cars, but to the environment you drive through. For example, there are over 200 audio effects for the destructible scenery alone! Not to mention that there are authentic wildlife sounds – while drifting round corners in Australia you'll hear the sound of dingos and kookaburras.

Lastly, we actually had our audio team driven around in real rally cars by McRae himself while they recorded the sounds

of the cars. We then took the cars into a controlled environment where we almost destroyed them to get the best quality recordings we could.

OPS: Now that Sony and Immersion have settled their lawsuit regarding force feedback patents, etc. the word is rumble will be making a comeback in the PS3. Is force feedback something Codies misses and is it something you'd like to re-adopt?

AG: Force feedback is a great way to bring the experience of driving a rally car closer to the player. It subtly highlights the surface changes and invites you to drive to the limit. With the fantastic and at times terrifying crashes in *DIRT* it certainly adds impact to the collisions. As a result force feedback is certainly something that we will be looking into adopting on the PS3 if we can.

OPS: We're mad keen for the *V8 Supercars* series down under and now that we've seen what the Neon engine can do we're almost foaming at the mouth. We're sure *DIRT* will keep us occupied for some time but are there any V8 related carrots you can dangle in front of us for now?

AG: *Race Driver One* has only just been announced and is the next step in the series known as *V8 Supercars* in Australia. I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to give you any more details... but between you and me, it'll take circuit based racing to more global locations than ever before. Just keep your eyes peeled! 🐨

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

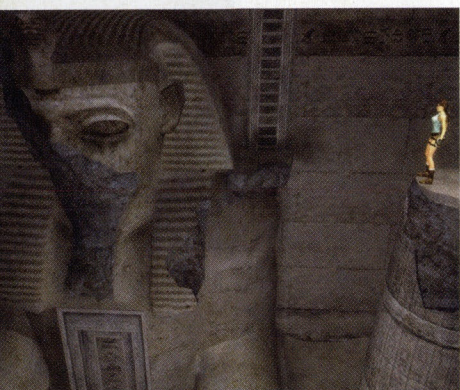
■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** JUNE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** EIDOS
■ **WEB:** www.tombraider.com



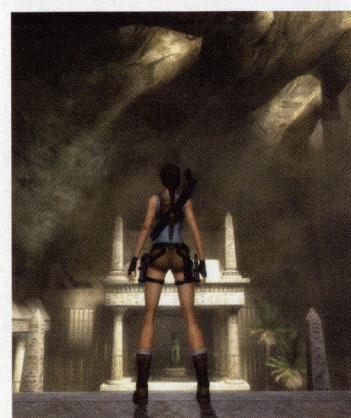
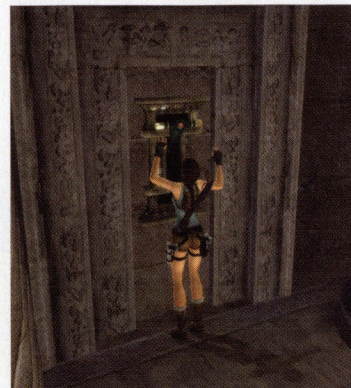
■ The panther's attempt at an 'ET moment' was about to blow up in his face...



■ Sigh. Go on... turn the magazine sideways – we know you're gonna...



■ "You taste crap" said the fussy crocodile...



IT'S THE MONSTER MASH

In news just to hand we've discovered not all of Lara's foes will be straight out of Cuddly Widdle Animals Weekly. Mutant mummies, T-rexes, Atlantean mutants, centaur mutants, giant mutants and human foes join the rather cute menagerie you have faced in previous tomb raids. What's with all the mutants, though? Surely being a centaur or a giant is enough? Oh well, you'll know more when we do.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We're using the original narrative as a framework, taking the key moments and expanding on them."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Yes, that's very nice, but why not just make another *Tomb Raider* game with new challenges? Are we really that nostalgic?

TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY

Has it really been 10 years since we first said: "Hey, nice rack!"?

It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since Lara Croft raided her first tomb, but there it is – time flies when you've mostly been ignoring a franchise. To be fair Crystal Dynamics brought the *Tomb Raider* games from the brink of falling into the "shithouse game abyss" with *Tomb Raider: Legend* which made up for some truly woeful entries in the series. And yes, *Angel of Darkness* – we are talking about you.

However a lot can change in 10 years. Can the original, despite its obvious charms, be pimped up to the extent that it will satisfy our often jaded gamer sensibilities?

Yes, say the creators – citing the example of the *King Kong* remake by Peter Jackson. Sure the basic plot beats are the same, but there's a heaping helping of new additions to the mix.

So what's new? Well, *Tomb Raider:*

Legend gave Lara some cool gadgets like a grappling hook and improved combat mechanics. These are included in the *Anniversary* edition. Those of you who are fans of the franchise will remember that, unlike *Legend*, the original *Tomb Raiders* had you – in a very PETA-unfriendly move – shooting bears, bats, wolves and other growly members of the animal kingdom. This returns with a few additions. Now if you press **X** you get up more quickly and you can use 'adrenalin dodge' to get out of the way of, say, a charging grizzly.

Let's face it – for all of Lara's bustiness and gun-toting carry-on – the *Tomb Raider* games are puzzle games, with a bit of platform jumping, trap-dodging and beast fighting thrown in. This remains the case with *Anniversary* and you'll find the med packs in the same place, but the artifacts in different ones.

The puzzles are similar to the first game, but given a more modern wrinkle – still, for all the bells and whistles this is essentially a prettier version of the original.

Now, if you've never played the original *Tomb Raider* – and many have not – this is certainly worth a look. But if your gamer memory can still recall the traps and tribulations of Ms. Croft's maiden voyage, you'll have to ask yourself: "do I really want to splash out for what is essentially the same game?"

It's a curious choice to remake an original rather than continue with the more action-oriented *Legend* and pretty soon, in a future issue you'll be able to see if it was the right one. Our excitement level is there – it's a game you would have killed people for 10 years ago – but we're remaining cautiously optimistic, rather than doing the monkey dance. **— Anthony O'Connor**



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PS3

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PS3 TOP TEN



1. MotorStorm
2. Resistance
3. Fight Night Round 3
4. Oblivion
5. Virtua Tennis 3
6. Marvel Ultimate Alliance

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r: Gameplayer has been putting the...
exactly is worth cheering about. more...



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are you one?

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI GAMES
■ **DEVELOPER:** RADICAL
■ **WEB:** www.radical.ca



■ Hot vampire animal chicks: worth the effort? We think so...



■ "We do the mash! (we do the monster mash)"



■ How much would you like to punch this guy in the face? Answer – a lot.

CRASH OF THE TITANS

Crash is back... and this time he's riding big monsters and stuff!

Crash Bandicoot has always been the Mario of the PlayStation world.

Sure he leapt on to some other systems but it always felt like he called the black box, be it PSone or PS2, home.

Not that we always *wanted* that damn bandicoot. The original games by Naughty Dog were quite impressive in a pointless, but compelling, platformy kinda way. However, since his PS2 debut everything has become increasingly tedious and silly. Naughty Dog pawned the marsupial and went on to *evolve* the platform genre with the *Jak & Daxter* series which left the inanely grinning 'coot looking a little bit like acid wash jeans and Jason Donovan/Kylie Minogue duets. That is, awesome, um... we mean, way past their prime.

So when we heard there'd be another *Crash* game coming to the PS2 – the office did the Mexican SHRUG. It's like the

Mexican wave, but instead of standing up and cheering you go: "Meh."

But far be it from us to snipe a title way before it's released. Let's have a gander at the story, eh?

Crash's arch enemies Neo and Nina Cortex have mutated numerous amounts of creatures on Crash's island. They've transformed from cute widdle things into shambling, glowing-eyed beasts. Of doom. Doom we tell thee!

Being the Bandicoot equivalent of Shaft, Crash uses his wits, courage, fruit-picking abilities and power of 'jumping on stuff' to harness and hijack the rampaging creatures and take them down.

Why, you ask? He's going to use them against each other. My God, it's a plan that's just crazy enough to work!

So it seems you have to get the biggest Titan to defeat the other Titans and... that's about all we know about the plot for now.

We do, however, know stuff about some new features in this bad boy:

Crash can control, play and battle 15 different and totally unique enemies.

He can use their special abilities – like breathing fire and strike with earth-shaking attacks that make the bad guys tremble.

The wily old bandicoot can even use a Titan as a weapon to blow away the others and then collect their skills to replay a level with their powers.

But it's not just bestiality. Wait... try that again: it's not just beasts you'll be using. Crash has got moves baby! A powerful, acrobatic fighting system with flying kicks, punches and... other stuff. There'll also be power-ups to unlock new dope moves.

Crash can interact with his environment in ways he's never done before. He can Climb trees, flip off springboards, toss Aku Aku onto the ground and use it like a skateboard/surfboard hybrid, replete with grinds and hanging ten. There's also the option of playing co-op as a mate can join in – and bugger off – whenever they want. You can even "jack" them (who isn't laughing at *that* special move?) and create all manner of mayhem.

Can Crash move with the times or will he be trying to fit into those too-tight bogan jeans? Keep an eye out for future issues. **Anthony O'Connor**

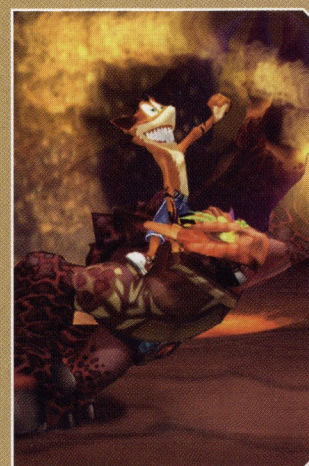
WHAT THEY SAY:

■ Stuff like, "Power up skills to unlock new attacks and blazing combos."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A new direction is essential for this series to survive. We haven't seen much but what we've seen looks good. If this gets taken in an original, and cool, direction there could be life in this old bandicoot yet.

WORKING TOGETHER TO SMASH STUFF



Ever wanted to ride your friends? Oh, stop giggling. With *Crash's* co-op options you can have a mate lob in and out at your whim. Not impressed? Seen it before? What if we were to tell you that said mate could be all monsterised and you could hop atop his back and gallop through the game causing bulk destruction? Now that's more like it!



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MUSIC BY NORIHIKO HIBINO / ENDING THEME "CALLING TO THE NIGHT" VOCALS BY NATASHA FARROW / DIRECTOR: MASAHIRO YAMAMOTO / PRODUCER: NORIAKI OKAMURA / GENERAL MANAGER & PRODUCER: HIDEO KOJIMA
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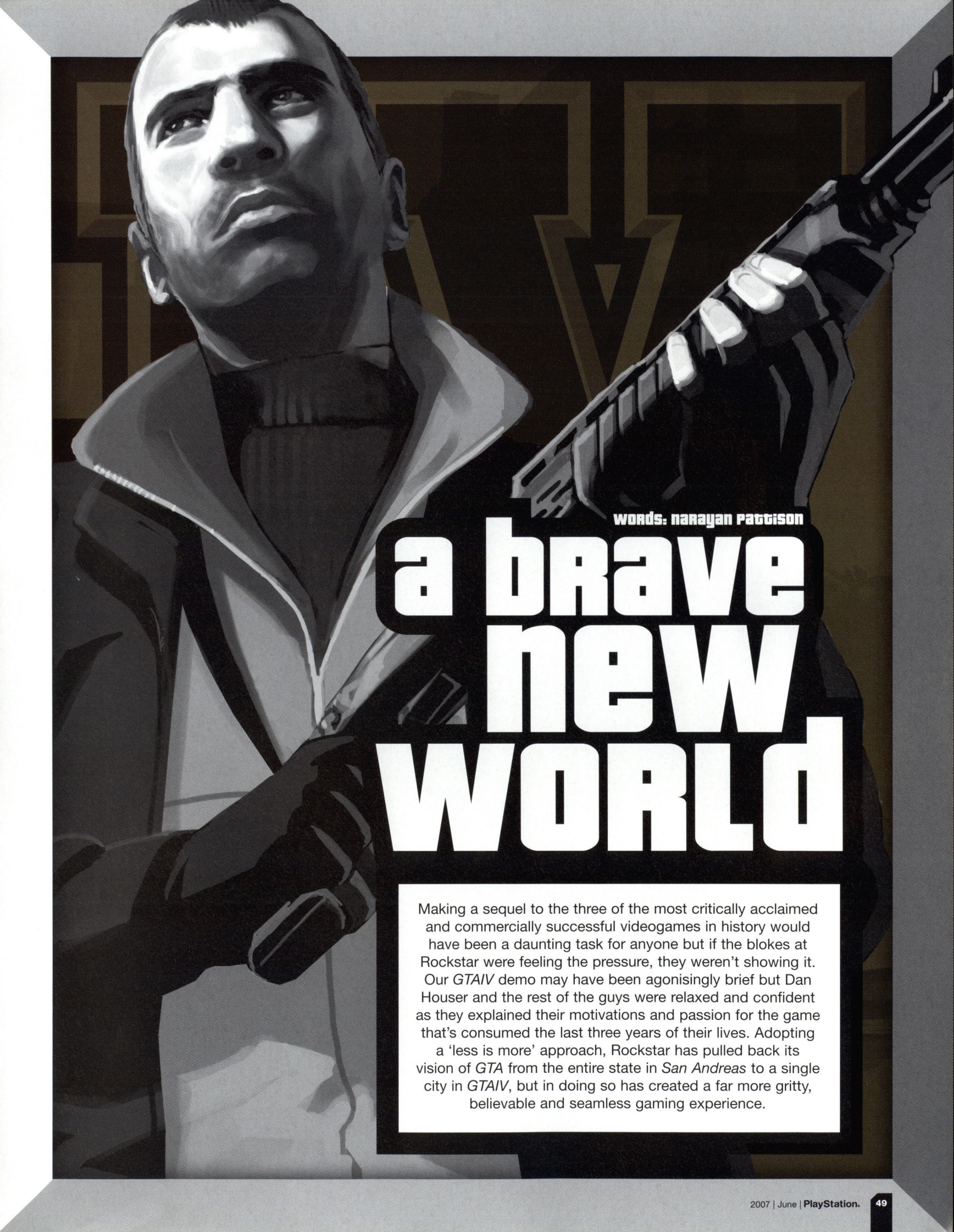


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PSP
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words: narayan pattison

a brave new world

Making a sequel to the three of the most critically acclaimed and commercially successful videogames in history would have been a daunting task for anyone but if the blokes at Rockstar were feeling the pressure, they weren't showing it. Our *GTAIV* demo may have been agonisingly brief but Dan Houser and the rest of the guys were relaxed and confident as they explained their motivations and passion for the game that's consumed the last three years of their lives. Adopting a 'less is more' approach, Rockstar has pulled back its vision of *GTA* from the entire state in *San Andreas* to a single city in *GTAIV*, but in doing so has created a far more gritty, believable and seamless gaming experience.

It's not really surprising but it's definitely encouraging to meet the Rockstar guys and see that they're even more passionate about making GTA games than their millions of fans are about playing them. During the visit the team enthused about their driving desire to create a truly next generation action adventure game that delivers an experience that just wasn't possible on previous consoles. Rockstar well and truly delivered a new sort of game like nothing before it with *GTAIII*, so we, along with the rest of the world, have spent the last two years gagging for a sneak peak of what Rockstar has in store with *GTAIV*.

In contrast to the persistent rumours about *GTA: London*, Rockstar has instead chosen to return *GTAIV* to the city that

kick-started the whole *GTA* phenomenon – Liberty City (New York). Unlike the vague representation of New York found in *GTAIII*, the Liberty City in *GTAIV* mirrors the real city in great detail. Every famous landmark, from the Statue of Liberty to Times Square, has been recreated authentically and each of the districts will have their own local flavour.

Unlike some other games out there (yes, *True Crime* and *The Getaway*, we're looking at you) Rockstar hasn't simply slavishly mapped out a city block-by-block with no thought to whether there's a gameplay benefit to it. One of the overriding themes from the *GTA* games is Rockstar's commitment to creating a seamless world that's fun to explore. Suburb upon suburb of

randomly generated houses simply didn't add anything worthwhile to last generation games.

Now that the *GTA* experience has evolved into a more realistic take on society, there is a reason to base the environment much more closely on a real place. *GTA*'s AI, physics and plot has reached a stage where it's at a much more believable level and so it makes sense to explore it all in the most realistic depiction of a city yet seen.

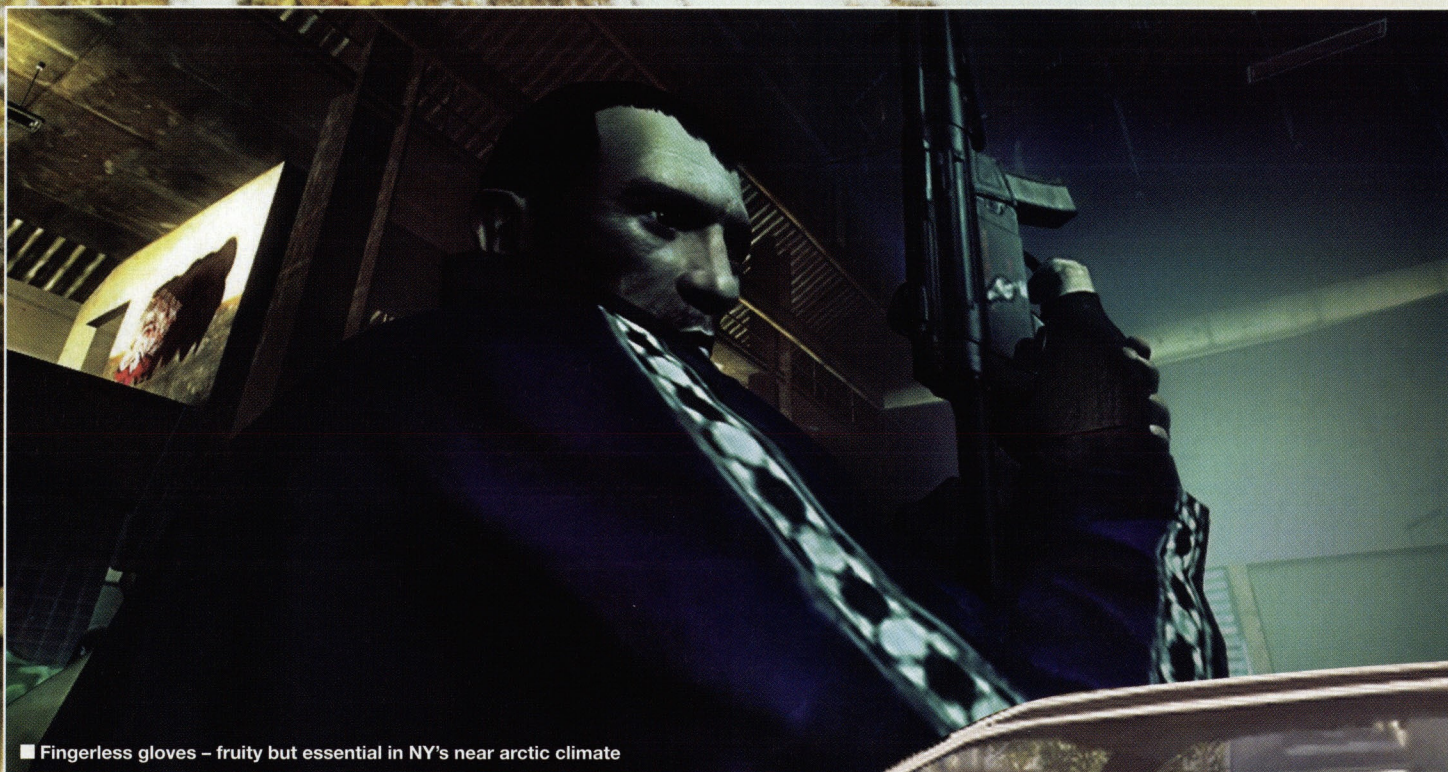
the demo

After spending 24 hours soaking in the bustling city atmosphere of New York we were led to a nearby hotel for a gameplay demo of arguably the most anticipated game ever, *GTAIV*. Before the

demo began we were told that the game takes place in the present day and that everything we are seeing is running real-time on the console.

Niko Bellic, the thoroughly unfriendly looking Eastern European immigrant who plays the lead role in *GTAIV* stands in his cousin Roman's taxi depot, clad in a cheap tracksuit. It's 8am in Broker (*GTAIV*'s take on Brooklyn), sunlight is streaming into the garage and pedestrians and traffic can be seen outside through the windows.

To say Niko has had a seedy past is an understatement. In his own words he has "killed people, smuggled people, sold people...". He's been lured to Liberty City by the promise of a better life. Unsurprisingly, Niko's cousin Roman's



■ Fingerless gloves – fruity but essential in NY's near arctic climate

promise of constant indulgence in a buffet of girlfriends, sports cars and hottubs was a lie and Niko will likely have to fall back on a life of crime to survive Liberty City's concrete jungle.

As Niko emerges from the garage, the believability of the new Liberty City is overwhelming. Where *GTA*'s visuals have previously been exaggerated and cartoonesque, the street now comes alive with high definition textures, accurate lighting and a far more extensive and believable range of human behaviour.

Even at this early hour of the morning we see people reading newspapers, others gesturing as they talk on public phones and more people sitting on steps, chatting and absently flicking dust from

their trousers. We really know we're in Liberty City when we see an 80-year-old granny staggering down the street as she takes swigs from a bottle of whisky.

As Niko moves through the pedestrians on the footpath we get to see a sample of his enhanced animations. When walking normally he moves with a casual stride but whenever other pedestrians get too close he pushes them aside and walks by in a deft *Assassin's Creed*-style move.

We feel the base of a nearby car's sub woofer as it rolls past us. We could tell you about the music it was blaring out of its stereo... but then Rockstar would have to kill us. None of the game's music has been signed up yet, so we've been asked not to discuss it at this

stage. Considering that the game is set in present day, Rockstar can (artists permitting) take its pick of every song ever made, so *GTAIV*'s soundtrack will be pretty special.

As Niko passes an ATM we see a message flash up about pressing a button to access funds. Exactly how this realistic method of accessing your cash will alter the gameplay is unclear, but if we had to guess we'd be inclined to assume it'll revolve around risk and reward. If you choose to carry a small amount of cash with you, you may not have enough to bribe characters and buy illegal items when opportunities arise. However, carry a large wad of cash around to aid your bribing and purchasing needs and you may well

run the risk of losing any cash on your person when you're mugged or killed.

At this point Niko pulls a gun from his jacket and enters a nearby apartment. He's able to travel from the street and into the building without any loading screens. As he scans around the detailed lounge room and kitchen we notice he can aim freely while walking (something that took considerable work to achieve in *San Andreas*). Finding no threats in the apartment, Niko exits out into a seedy back alley, populated by piles of litter, weeds and homeless guys huddling around fires in barrels.

To get a better view of his surroundings Niko climbs a nearby telegraph pole. From this vantage point we can appreciate the far greater

■ How many people have died at those hands? A LOT!





■ The day-to-night transitions now completely alter the game. Imagine a stealth mission here?

☒ he smashes the window with his elbow, then leans in and hotwires the car as the glass spills out onto the road ☒

vertical density that *GTAIV*'s Liberty City offers over previous *GTAs*. The skyline is crowded with complex architecture, above-ground trainlines, fire escapes, endless billboards and the Broker Bridge in the distance.

After descending the telegraph pole Niko breaks into a jog. The new animation system allows Niko to jog with realistic fluidity, even leaning his body into corners as he runs around them. We get an even more impressive demonstration of his animation when a random car bumps into him as he's crossing the road. Niko staggers back a couple of steps as he steadies himself and regains balance with startling believability.

You could hardly demonstrate a new *Grand Theft Auto* game without some car thievery though. As Niko moves in for the

carjack, we see another one of his slick new animations. He smashes the window with his elbow, then leans in and hotwires the car as the shattered glass spills out onto the road.

As Niko drives through the industrial streets of Broker we get a real feel for lush new cityscape. Sunlight blooms between buildings and reflects off the car's paintwork while shadows gently roll over the car as it passes under train tracks. In contrast to the stunning visuals, the streets of Broker are a grungy mixture of rundown factories, overflowing dumpsters and dank back alleys. Rockstar also explained that the legendary *GTA* driving controls have been tirelessly tweaked and enhanced to factor in *GTAIV*'s far more complex physics engine. We can't wait for a test drive.

Seeing a good spot to stop and gather his thoughts, Niko pulls up beside a deserted waterside factory and gets out. As he approaches the water we hear seagulls squawking overhead, as well as the subtly different footstep effects as he walks from cement to gravel.

As Niko surveys Liberty City's towering Algonquin Island (Manhattan) from across the water he decides to make a phone call. Niko places a call to one of his contacts, asking him to come down and meet him by the docks.

And that's where our time with *GTAIV* abruptly ended. To say Rockstar left us wanting more is the understatement of the decade.

Joining the dots

What the deuce? The guy walks down

a street, then takes a drive to the waterside? Are you kidding?

It's easy to feel slighted on first impressions of this painfully brief demo but for those paying attention there are three subtle hints about some pretty fundamental changes to the *Grand Theft Auto* template.

The first one is being able to see through windows. It sounds basic but imagine how this can be used to change the dynamic of missions, particularly those where you're whacking mob bosses. You will now be able to stake out houses, observe the patrol routes of security guards and the behaviour of your target, then plan your attack. Whether that means storming in the front door with both Uzis blazing or methodically capping enemies with your sniper rifle from a hotel

room window across the street is entirely up to you.

The second revelation was in the lack of a loading screen as Niko ran off the street and into an apartment. Without any loading screens to separate interiors from exteriors you'll now be able to engage in outrageous movie-style gunfights, chasing thugs through houses, across roofs and down back alleys.

The last, and arguably most fundamental, implication for gameplay changes lies in Niko's phone call. Being able to contact other characters whenever you want has the potential to completely change the way you interact with the game. Rather than having to drive to a location and step into a glowing circle to activate an arbitrary cut-scene, you can interact with the characters via your mobile phone, just as you would in reality. As well as the obvious convenience of being able to trigger missions wherever and whenever you want, this also gives the characters far more believability. Imagine how much more realistic a character will seem if

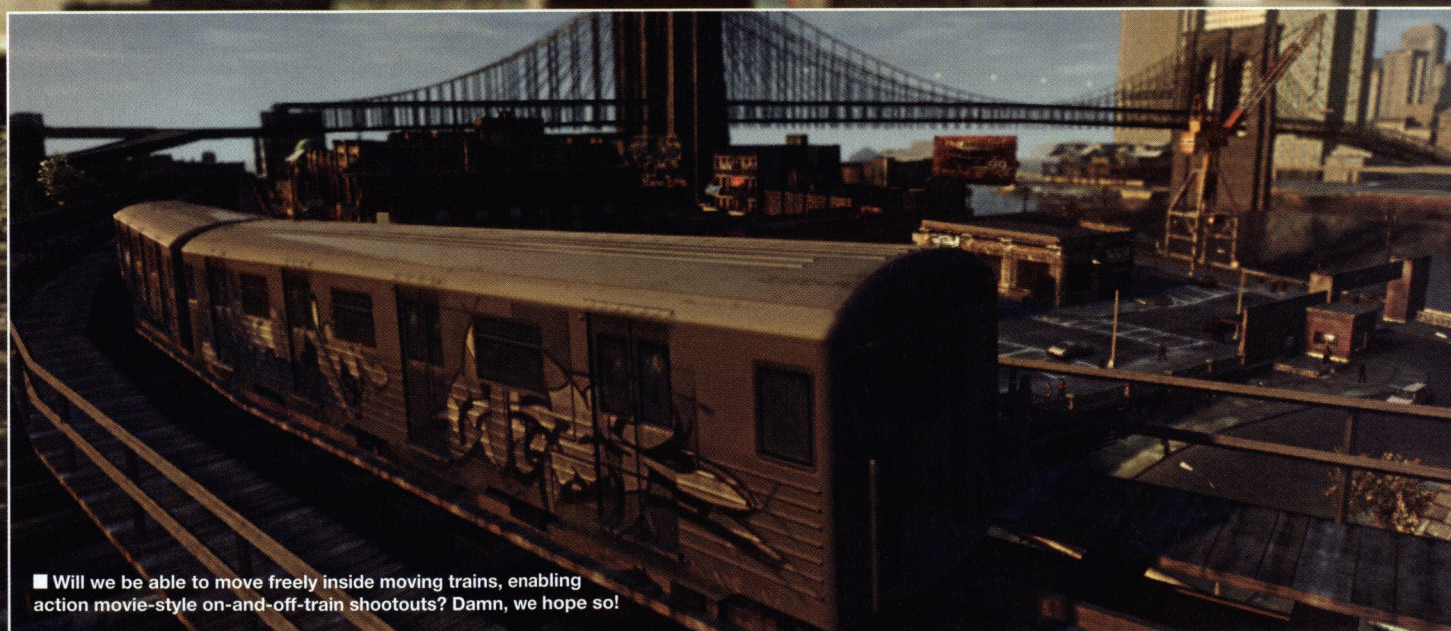
after a botched robbery you find yourself pinned down inside a bank with a SWAT team covering your only exit and you're able to place a call to your cousin Roman and ask him to come and save your arse? As he rolls up with three of his mates and starts a shootout with police, you take advantage of the distraction by coming out guns blazing and together you're able to fend off the cops and speed off with the loot.

Although the technology for a game where characters could understand you speaking into a microphone and replying with meaningful answers is still years off, there's no reason why you couldn't have up to a dozen preset commands that you could phone to any character you want. From the demo we know that 'meet me here' is one command, so it's quite likely that there will be others like 'create a distraction', 'rescue me' or 'bust me out of prison'.

That's enough theorising from us for the moment, it's time to hear from the man with the answers, the creative genius behind GTA, Dan Houser. ▬

grand theft art

Even though *GTA/IV* was still six months from release when we visited New York in April, its presence was already impossible to miss. Street posters focusing on the "IV" could be seen regularly around city blocks, as well as a handful of these giant *IV* murals.



■ Will we be able to move freely inside moving trains, enabling action movie-style on-and-off-train shootouts? Damn, we hope so!

CRIME does Pay

In contrast to the brief glimpse we had of the game, Dan Houser talks openly about his ambitious plans for *GTAIV*. Despite creating the three most successful videogames ever Dan, and his brother Sam have shied away from the public spotlight. It's not from having a lack of anything interesting to say, but instead from a desire to see the Rockstar brand, rather than any one person get the credit for the games' success.

DH: Before we start, there's just one thing that I want to say. If I ever say 'I', I mean 'we'. We're pretty clear that the games are not made by one person or by one or two of us, [they're]

made by well over a hundred people collaboratively. A lot of people like to present the fact that they are the ones making these games themselves as individuals, which is impossible, it's

so complicated now. What's fun about working in videogames is working collaboratively with lots of other really clever people who work with really different skill sets and I can hide how stupid I am behind their genius. That has been amazing for me.

OPS: *Vice City* gave us a bigger city and *San Andreas* introduced an entire state. Some people might assume that the next logical step is a country. With *GTAIV* you seem to have gone smaller. Why is that and how has it changed the experience?

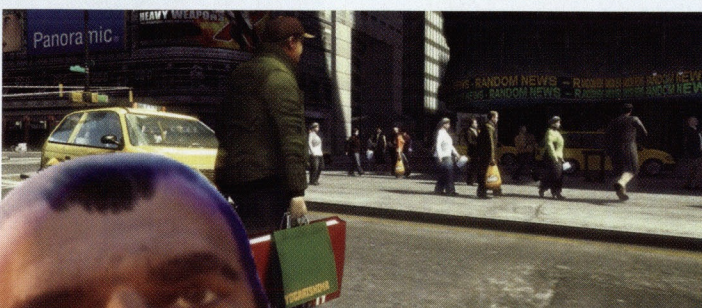
DH: Well area wise, the scope is about the same as *San Andreas*. I don't know exactly how it compares area to area, but it's bigger than any one city we've had in a game before. So it's still a pretty big game, but obviously we wanted to go more precise. Once you're making art assets at that kind of resolution they are very, very time

consuming to make. Once you want something that has a degree of detail and precision that we've never had before... I don't think executing that across a vast scale is possible, yet.

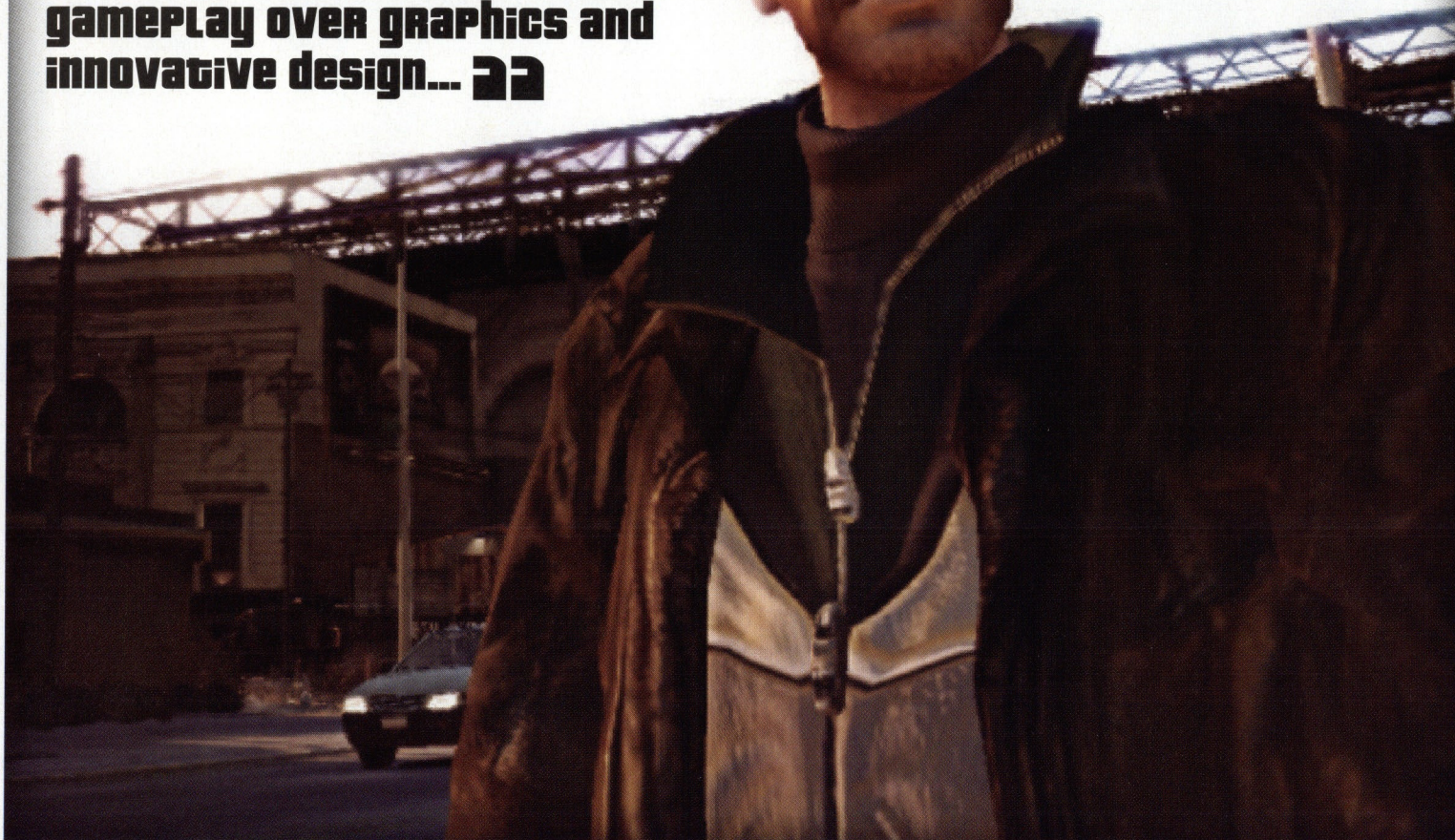
If we give people exactly what they think they want then, a) we're not doing a very interesting job any more and, b) we're not going to amaze them. Our goal is to try and do things that are spectacular and not quite what people expect from the game.

OPS: The *GTA* titles are arguably the biggest gaming influence of the last decade. How do you feel about that and do you think that *GTAIV* will have the same impact and influence that *GTAIII* did?

DH: Obviously very proud. Everyone worked very hard and we thought we were making something that was really groundbreaking. We thought as such, that if we pushed it hard so it doesn't



Our mantra has always been high production values, gameplay over graphics and innovative design... 22



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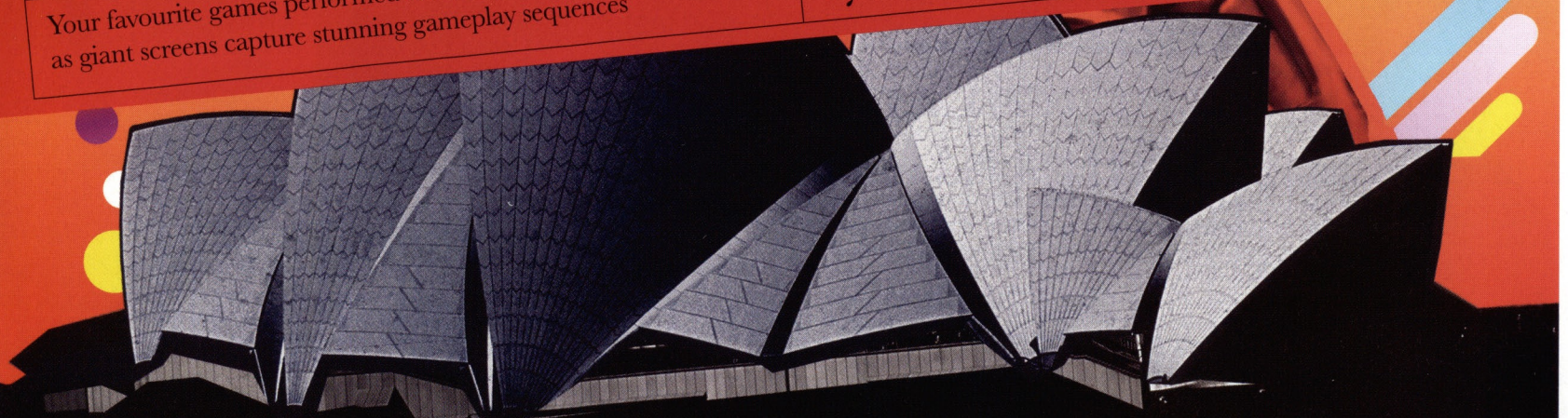
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Multiplayer mayhem

Ever since *GTA: Liberty City Stories* showed off its superb six-player multiplayer mode on PSP, we've been day-dreaming about the potential for a similar but far more fluid and engaging multiplayer experience in *GTA/IV*. Although details about the multiplayer content were limited, Rockstar did confirm that *GTA/IV* would have a range of multiplayer experiences that cover some pretty ambitious ground. Although being able to play through the main game co-operatively with another player has been ruled out, there will be co-operative aspects of the multiplayer mode. We'd assume that this refers to gameplay along the lines of the team-based multiplayer modes in the two PSP *GTA* games. Whatever the exact specifics turn out to be, the ability to run rampant through *GTA/IV*'s Liberty City during explosive deathmatches is sure to provide months of additional interest in the *GTA/IV* experience.

■ The sheer scope and believability of the new Liberty City is genuinely boggling

just iterate in a bland way... and I believe that seems to have paid off. So that is something that we are really proud of. Whether other people should also try and innovate as much as we do. That's their business, not mine.

We are a company that focuses hardcore on trying to be innovative; trying not to copy people, trying to make progressive design and new kinds of games that people haven't played before and that we believe in.

Because we started off as a small company with no money, our theory

was that the only way we could compete was by being innovative and not following the common herd. Our mantra has always been high production values, gameplay over graphics and innovative design that helps draw people into the worlds. We've stuck pretty closely to that over the years because it seems to be what helps create what we think is fun about games; which is a really immersive experience. They immerse you in this fake world, which no other medium can and that's an amazing kind of thing to them; that you can be somewhere that isn't where you normally live. You can 'watch' that in other mediums but you can't actually be there and wander around the buildings, wander around the houses and meet the people in the way that games allow you to do. That is something that we find fascinating and like to f---k around with and try and develop and try and make more engaging and fun for people. I

generally believe we are only scratching the surface of that

stuff and I also believe we are doing a lot better job with *GTA/IV* than we have in the past with that kind of thing.

So in terms of the second part of your question: is *GTA/IV* going to have as big of an impact? Well, I can't predict that because that's not my job. If people like it, they like it. We just do our best, but I will say that we are and we have got a big, very experienced, very ambitious team and everyone is working like lunatics to try and make that happen. We believe in what we are trying to do here and hopefully we will achieve those goals because we are trying to make a game that will amaze people, as *GTA/III* did.

OPS: Just picking up on something you said about gameplay over graphics, we're interested then to find out why you focused on the graphics with *GTA/IV* today? Is it just because it is at an earlier point in the lifecycle?

DH: There were lots of hints about gameplay. We've not really shown you much yet...

We are trying to play a balancing game. Our ultimate goal is that someone playing the game has a really wonderful experience doing that. It has to be. The way we have to do that is to, on the one hand, show them enough before the game comes out via you guys and via trailers or whatever it might be, that they are intrigued enough to want to buy it. On the other hand you don't want to show them everything because then they are not excited when they play it, they know what's coming. So it's a real balancing act. We feel that at the moment we showed stuff

earlier than we normally would do purely because we have got to get enough people excited enough to want to go out and buy these new consoles.

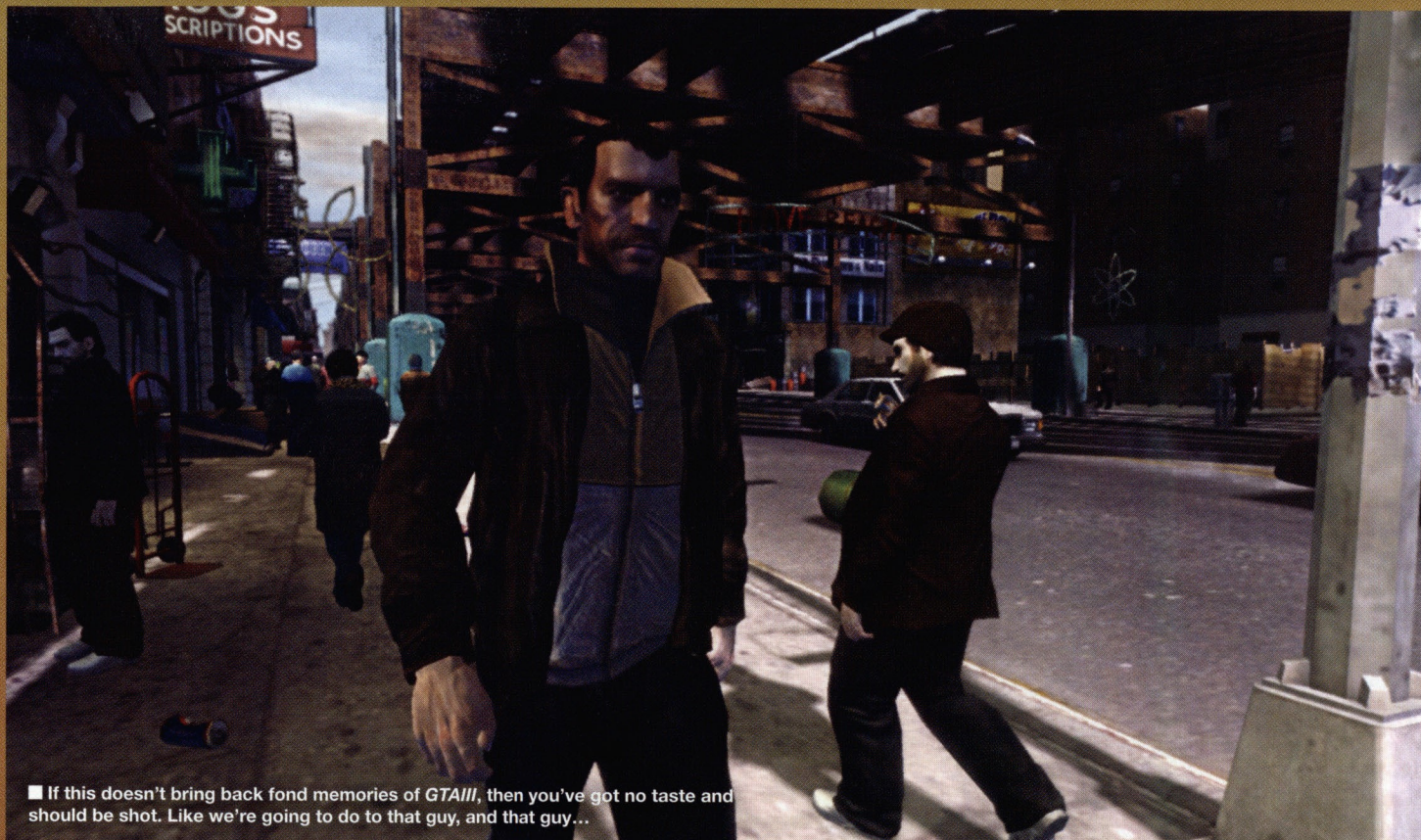
Speaking for myself, because of the games out there at the moment, I wouldn't go and spend six hundred bucks [\$999AUD] on one of those machines yet. There's not enough interesting software, unless you happen to really like having an expensive box that shows off graphics on some really uninspiring games, that's your business.

We are trying to make things that will make a large number of people go out and buy the machines. We have to do that by showing stuff early because it's a big purchase to people.

OPS: We were curious about whether it was a change of focus that this time the visuals are the strongest feature, or that this preview is simply adding another layer to *GTA/IV*'s unveiling.

DH: I think the gameplay's going to match the visuals – it has to. Otherwise the game won't have the integrity of the previous games. We're really obsessed by this idea that the thing is a coherent package; from the time you see the first poster advertising the game, to when you see the end credits having finished the game, it should feel like a consistent package; something that we've always been interested in, in terms of making consumer items and making as close to a perfect videogame as we can make.

Some of the things that you see might seem like they're graphical, but they actually have a direct translation to gameplay; such as interiors that you can look into. Interiors that are in the world,



■ If this doesn't bring back fond memories of *GTAIII*, then you've got no taste and should be shot. Like we're going to do to that guy, and that guy...

they are not like a separate bit that loads off the world; you can actually walk seamlessly through the interior and out the other side. I think that graphically that is very interesting, but actually from a gameplay perspective it's a whole lot more interesting as it actually allows you to navigate the kind of art division dichotomy that was created because the machines couldn't do it any other way on the last game.

Things like at the end of the demo, you see the phone. Now, the obvious point there is he's making a call on the phone, something you haven't been able to do before. You think that through; you'll actually be able to navigate through the game experience through your phone which, I think, works very elegantly. We have always looked at these elegant ways of recreating a real life experience in the game, the obvious one being the radio and here's one which lets you manage relationships in the game, but doing it through the exact way people manage their relationships in a modern city.

On the one hand our goal is to create a game which feels like the ultimate gangster crime experience and on the other hand, it's to create a game that feels like the ultimate living in a modern city experience. A work and play vibe, and the phone is good for doing the former because you can be given missions on it, you can be told to go here, receive text messages and all the other things you get, but certainly for running your social life; it's an amazing device for that. That's a mechanic that is available to us perfectly that isn't available to say a film or a book. They couldn't do that and its sort of something where games

are going to be able to recreate the sensation of modern life much better than in a film, which is obviously something which we are all motivated by. We are constantly made to feel like this is some kind of inferior art form.

OPS: Did you see *GTAIV* as a sequel to *GTAIII* or to *San Andreas*?

DH: Neither to be honest. We saw it as a seismic shift on from the previous games, so it's not really a sequel; it's a new version of some of the ideas that the other ones had in them. *GTAIII*, *Vice*

experience that had a degree of fidelity and clarity that the other ones hadn't.

Obviously we have done a lot with the characters to make them look so much better and then we tried to think that through. What does that mean with all the other stuff? What else do we want to do that we weren't capable of doing previously; well, we want to have much better physics, have much better targeting, have much better vehicle control, have a world where there is less of a space between doing a mission and not doing a mission; so it feels more like the same overall experience.

more non-mission based things to do and make the missions better.

There are [none of the old] characters; it's a totally new world. The reason for that being that we've done five games with those characters and feel that maybe, because of the game being set in 2007, all of the ones that we like are dead now; or half have been killed or would be too old because they were 40 in the '80s.

Also, we had the desire to do something new and on the other hand the characters and the sense of those games evolved in conjunction with the way that the games looked; the way we wrote the games, the way that we designed the characters, that was only valid for a game that looked like that. The way the game is now we need a different style of character, a different kind of writing and so we felt it was good to do something fresh. To be honest with you, we haven't yet figured out if this is going to be leading onto another bunch of games or not, we are just focusing on this at the moment. But certainly, it's a totally new start, a different myth from the *GTA* universe I guess is a potential way of putting it.

OPS: In terms of weapons and vehicles you had a pretty good spread in *San Andreas*...

DH: Yeah, I don't think we will be adding vast numbers of things there. It's more about honing in and tightening and making what's there work for the characters. *GTA* is about a large range of vehicles and we are certainly going to keep that and make sure there are some gameplay reasons for them being in there. So, for example, with a

games are going to be able to recreate the sensation of modern life much better than in a film

City and *San Andreas*, they're non-linear sequels in a representative trilogy. This is a new *GTA* experience, so it's not really like a sequel in that way. There is no narrative link between them; there is no world link between them beyond some of the branding. So at that point we were just going; "We want to make another *GTA* game because we still don't think we have made the ultimate crime city experience game. What did we like about what we were doing before and what can we improve?" We slowly developed a list of things that we wanted to do; from a design, and then things that we could do and other game content stuff. The overriding theme was creating this

We want the missions to be bigger and more engaging; we want lots of new ways of obtaining content so the whole world feels like it's constantly changing. It's lots of little bits that we were doing before, but trying to do it, because we've had three years. The core ideas of *GTA* – being a world with some tasks to do in this world that led to a narrative unfolding – we didn't throw away all of that, we've just added so much to it. Equally, we've not thrown away anything from *GTAI*, as that is the premise of the game; here's a city, here's some things to do if you want. Well it's stayed like that, we've just tried to add new bits to that and give you

■ "Why do they call you the Scarred Psycho?" "Why don't you ask my last partner?" "But he's dead." "Exactly!"



game in one city there are no longer planes because there's nowhere to fly to, there will be helicopters. Once you live in New York, the feeling is, you take planes to get here, and you don't take planes across the city. But people do helicopter around, or rich people do. That felt like something we wanted to recreate a lot more than the planes. Things that don't work because of the map and the environment or the characters, those things we might not have in there. But there will be the usual very large range of vehicles and weapons.

OPS: The new Liberty City looks a lot grittier, darker and a lot more realistic. Can you discuss how that flows on through the gameplay?

games don't kill people, guns do

When we asked Dan Houser why he thought some politicians seem more determined to ban videogames than guns, he had some very interesting thoughts on the topic.

Dan Houser: My honest opinion? It's because the videogames industry doesn't have enough lobbyists paying for politicians. Straightforward. Let's just call a spade a spade on this one. The Democratic Party doesn't go after the gun lobby anymore in this country because they are scared of them. They go after the videogames industry because the videogames industry doesn't have enough lobbyists. That is just because it's a new industry; it doesn't know how to play the little game and that's the same in every country.

We should just accept this for what it is now. The amount of trouble that we have had to get into in order to not say this stuff straight forwardly. Create the entertainment; put a rating system on it, end of the debate. There is no dark heart that videogames are somehow possessing children, its utter dribble. But politics is driven by money. If there is so much money in the entertainment industry and so much money in politics, then the idea [is] that until politicians have a vested interest in protecting videogames that doesn't provide some of the glamour that the movie industry has always provided to Hollywood or to Washington or to Sydney or Canberra or to wherever. Without that, we lack some of the star power that they have and so we need to find a different way of getting the message across. It's a form of entertainment and nothing more. There is not this grand technological conspiracy that we are going to take over the world with this stuff. It's nonsense.

DH: Well hopefully the gameplay itself is the same. In terms of grittiness I guess that's provided by the story. The story is certainly pretty gritty this time. Certainly parts of the story in *San Andreas* were pretty gritty, but this one is much darker and more human in some ways. The rough story set up being that you play as Niko; he comes to America to escape some trouble back home and he wants to meet his cousin who has been sending him all these emails and letters saying that he has been living the American dream; has five girlfriends, has four cars, owns three hot-tubs and when he turns up it's all a load of rubbish. Roman hasn't made any kind of success with his life here, he is just writing this kind of fantasy stuff.

Roman is a nice character, but he's not a go-getter, more a dreamer and he's also heavily in debt to a load of people. They are living on the fringes of society over in the poor parts of Brooklyn, which we call Broker in the game. You engage with the world via that way and see if you can escape your past, all that kind of thing. It's a more slow and dark start to the game than you have had in the past, partly because we wanted to make all aspects of the game fun; such as the fun of turning up somewhere new and trying to get all of the components of the game understood. That includes the fist-fighting, hand-to-hand fighting, melee fighting and the gun fighting. It's about making each of those parts fun again, or feel new and fresh and next generation; because if they were just like the old games then they wouldn't be fun again.

We've changed the style of the way people speak, that is slightly different because we are trying to make things feel more realistic. We've certainly invested a lot of energy in trying to put a lot more AI into the world. Pedestrians have multiple behaviors; they may be talking on phones, asking for a lighter or standing in bunches. Just trying to give the whole world a lot more energy and life that it hasn't had before, equally there are large numbers of pedestrians, large numbers of cars and things which will make it look more like a real city.

OPS: With the more realistic and believable style; you talked about there not being planes because it doesn't make sense as there is

nowhere to fly to. Will that mean that other typical GTA elements won't fit in? Like flying around in a jetpack doing checkpoint missions, etc.? Will anything that doesn't fit with the believable world be dropped?

DH: Not necessarily. It's a balancing act, that stuff. The reason I can't sum it up that accurately is because the game isn't finished just yet, so, we'll see if it's fun enough. Ultimately, I suppose the way we gauge fun is; does the individual fun that you get from that mission detract from the overall vibe of the game. Something like jetpacks, I don't think would work in this game.

Excuse me, I'm just trying to think about any other examples of other things that wouldn't work in the game. We are not doing the weights, the body building and the eating just because we wanted to focus on the physics more and they got kind of conflicting.

Not really that I can think of. I mean it's like if we felt it didn't fit, we wouldn't put it in, because we always think that we have a game with lots of content. But, if it didn't fit and it was amazingly fun, we would probably try and figure out a way of making it fit.

The game is not going for this 100 percent ultra-photorealistic feel, it's still got a blown out feel. The way the characters are; you know they're not supposed to be 100 percent realistic, they're supposed to be just slightly larger than life. That is something that has the same truth as the types of missions you can do; some of the later missions, just because it's a big game and from a purely design perspective they still need to have lots to do in them and they get fairly extreme. The lives of criminals are quite repetitive, so to make the game fun you need to have diversity of characters and experiences and things you can do.

N: Terrorism is a big theme in the world at the moment, particularly in New York. Do you tackle it?

DH: Yes and No. There is no ground zero in the map because it didn't really seem relevant and it's pretty un-visual as a massive area of flat concrete, you know we have tried to give the map personality and get rid of things that make it feel like the map is repetitive.



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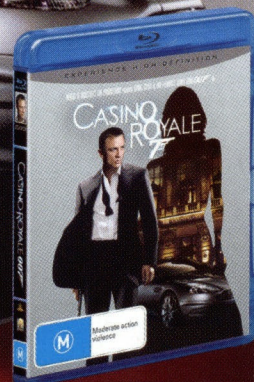


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less is more

That seemed to be a big theme for our sneak-peak at *GTA IV*. While it was the shortest and most gameplay-light *GTA* demo we've ever been treated to, it was peppered with tantalising hints at unquestionably the most ambitious *GTA* yet. What we've seen so far is already pretty bloody amazing but we're also inclined to assume that the features Rockstar has chosen not to reveal yet will be the real bombshells. Although *GTA IV*'s 19 October release date may be an agonising five months away, we do also know that there will be at least a couple of even more revealing previews between now and then. We're counting the days.

The game is definitely set in a post 9/11 world, even though it's a different version of America.

Is it a key central theme in the game? No. Is it going on in the background of the game world? Yes. In particular, some of the things we are trying to deal with is stuff like the way that 9/11 and the 'War On Terror' have been used to restrict any form of freedom and any sort of complaint people have is, "well it must be the fault of terrorists then". There is that kind of stuff in the background; behaviors, things you might hear on the radio, or other ways in which you consume media in the world, they will play on that a lot. Lots of security everywhere.

But no, he is Eastern European; he is not a Middle Eastern terrorist that some people on message boards have been discussing. God, how can you think that?

OPS: We think that destructible environments, arguably, are lots of fun but technically very difficult and also potentially quite controversial if you could just bring down a building in New York. Did you think about that?

DH: I think our theory was that, beyond any moral issue, it's a straightforward technical issue. It's very hard to do. It's almost not just the technology, but a design issue.

First of all, a rocket launcher wouldn't bring down one of these buildings. You would need a massive type of bomb to bring down a building and secondly, it doesn't really fit in with the whole, "I'm a gangster." Assuming that you could, for the sake of discussion, let's say I turn on some cheat and I get a hold of all of the

bombs that I want and I can blow up the whole city, it's going to become more like Dresden at that point and the game isn't playable and then where are you going to get your missions from? It breaks the continuity if you can do all of that. Beyond the fact that I don't think that it is going to be possible to do destruction. It's still very hard. I've seen some tech for some stuff we are just starting out now where you can make some parts of the environment destructible and make it look good. We wanted this thing to look really good, and to make buildings collapse in a way that looks nice... it's still really hard.

The thing that we always have to be aware of when we are making games is because of the relationship with, particularly these kinds of free-action-choice games, is that you have to be aware of these two types of people. People who want to play the game properly and people who want to see if they can f--k with the game and ruin it. One of our goals is to find the people who want to screw with the game and make them aware that we know that they are going to try and do that and we are actually going to amuse you when you try and do that by, say for example, someone coming out and trying to tell you something or warn you. We've thought this stuff through as best we can, we don't always succeed because there are a huge number, or infinite possibilities.

OPS: Did you consider a first-person view?

DH: No, not for a second. We are really into and we love to be able to control the character. I don't really like playing first-person games. I think that most



■ Holy fried-nipples on toast – this game looks hot!

guys in the team like playing first-person shooters but *GTA* isn't a straight first-person shooter. To me, the viewpoint is less immersive than a third-person one, because an FPS is so blinkered. I think that a third-person view is a more cinematic, fun and believable experience and you have the avatar to control in one and in the other one you don't.

If indeed we did do an FPS we are more likely to make that a third-person than the other way round. That is just more our taste. That just seems to be more what we like doing.

OPS: Would you ever consider setting a *GTA* game in a country outside of the US? Or is American culture simply comical to everyone?

DH: Both!! Yes, I know what you're saying and I think it's a good question and my answer to the two parts of it is yes and yes. *GTA* on the one hand is supposed to be a crime game, but on the other hand it is supposed to be a satire of American consumerist society that is also pretty closely mirrored in the UK or in Australia and lots of other places.

But certainly with those two they are very similar in some ways, although maybe a little bit more self aware of the absurdities. So it does have a universality that is appealing when you want to go and sell games around the world or to the world that

plays games. But would we consider doing it elsewhere? Yes we have, we just haven't ever made that maneuver. I would have a certain confidence of maybe doing it in England but anywhere else I wouldn't really know what was going on. The guys who make that kind of stuff on the team may not necessarily know where to begin. I'm sure that there are lots of interesting things to talk about in Russia or China or Japan about that aspect of society but I wouldn't know what they were and so we feel it wouldn't necessarily be *GTA*.

OPS: How does the vertical density of *GTA IV* factor into the gameplay? Can you go up on top of every building?

DH: Well I don't know about every building, because I don't know if that will be possible. But, I imagine the simple answer will probably be yes because you'll be able to fly a helicopter and land it on pretty much anything, so yeah. Making that feel fun and be part of the game; be it in chasing people across roofs, or having a bike up there or whatever it might be. Of course that's going to be a big part of the gameplay. Also making it fun in trying to get up there is also part of the gameplay. We've done a lot of work with some very clever physics so falling off the roofs should look really good as well. We are trying to make the sensation of a 3D city and to do that accurately you need that stuff in there to make it fun.

OPS: Last question. Are you keen to do *San Andreas Stories* for PSP?

DH: No real plans at the moment; we'll see what happens with the PSP. We're doing some other things. ▬



■ "What do you mean there's no cosmetic surgery option in the game? How am I supposed to get chicks looking like this? Dammit!!"



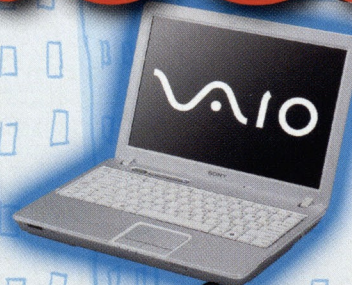
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BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY LIST

The official list of PS3-ready PlayStation 2 games

0-9			A			B			C			D			E			F			G			H			I			J			K		
10 Pin: Champion's Alley	...		A Train 6	...		B-boy	...		Cabela's Big Game Hunter	...		Dance: Europe	...		Eagle Eye Golf	...		Evolution GT	...		F1 Career Challenge	...		Half-Life	...		I Ninja	...		Jacked	...		Kaido Racer	...	
18 Wheeler	...		AC Milan Club Football	...		B.A.S.S. Strike	...		Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	...		Dance: UK	...		Earache Extreme Metal Racing	...		Evolution Skateboarding	...		F1 Championship Season 2000	...		Hamburg SV Club Football 2005	...		Indy Car Series	...		Jade Cocoon 2	...		Kaido Racer 2	...	
1945 I & II	...		AC Milan Club Football 2005	...		Backyard Wrestling:	...		Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One	...		Dancing Stage Fever	...		Eco The Dolphin	...		Extermination	...		F1 Racing Championship	...		Hamster Heroes	...		Inter Club Football 2005	...		James Bond 007:	...		Karaoke Stage	...	
Black Market Bowling	...		Ace Combat 4: Distant Thunder	...		There Goes The Neighbourhood	...		Call Of Duty 3	...		Dancing Stage Fusion	...		Echo Night Beyond	...		Extreme G3	...		Fahrenheit	...		Hard Hitters 2:	...		Leeds United Club Football	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Kelly Slater's Pro Surfing	...	
Blade 2	...		Ace Combat: The Balkan War	...		Bad Boys II	...		Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	...		Dancing Stage Max	...		Ed, Edd N Eddy:	...		Extreme Sprint	...		Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel	...		Harley-Davidson:	...		Legacy Of Cain: Blood Omen 2	...		James Bond 007:	...		Kengo: Master Of Bushido	...	
2002 FIFA World Cup	...		Ace Combat Squadron Leader	...		Barbie In The 12	...		Canis Canem Edit	...		Dancing Stage Megamix	...		Edd N Eddy:	...		EyeToy: Kinetic	...		Fame Academy	...		Harry Potter and	...		Leisure Suit Larry -	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Kessen	...	
2006 FIFA World Cup	...		Aces Of War	...		Barbie Horse Adventures	...		Capcom Classics	...		Dark Angel	...		Dragon Ball Z Budokai 2	...		EyeToy: Play	...		Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		LMA Manager 2002	...		James Bond 007:	...		Kessen II	...	
4x4 Evo 2	...		Action Girlz Racing	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Capcom Vs. SNK 2	...		Dark Chronicle	...		Dragon Ball Z Budokai 3	...		EyeToy: Play 2	...		Fantastic Four	...		Harry Potter and	...		Magna Cum Laude	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Kessen III	...	
4x4 Evolution	...		Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Car Wash Tycoon	...		Dark Cloud	...		Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Madden NFL 2003	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Kidz Sports Basketball	...		
50 Cent: Bulletproof	...		Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Carmen Sandiego: Secret	...		Delta Force Black Hawk Down	...		Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Madden NFL 2005	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Killer7	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Of The Stolen Drums	...		Delta Force Black Hawk Down	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Killzone	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Carol Vorderman's Sudoku	...		Destroy All Humans!	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		Kim Possible:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Cars	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		What's The Switch?	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Cartoon Network Racing	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Arthur	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Casper And The Ghostly Trio	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Kong	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Casper Spirit Dimension	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters: 2000/2001	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Castleween	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters: 2003	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Catwoman	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Celtic Club Football	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Celtic FC Club Football 2005	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Centre Court: Hard Hitter	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Championship Manager 2006	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Championship Manager 5	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Chaos Legion	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Chelsea Club Football	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Chelsea FC Club Football 2005	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
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			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Chicken Little	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Chicken Little: Ace In Action	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Circus Maximus	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		City Crisis	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Classic British Motor Racing	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
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			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Colin McRae Rally 4	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Colosseum: Road To Freedom	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Combat Ace	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Commandos 2	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Commandos Strike Force	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Conflict: Global Storm	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Conflict Zone	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...		Max Payne 2:	...		Agent Under Fire	...		King Of Fighters:	...		
			Adventures Of	...		Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	...		Conflict: Desert Storm 2	...		Destroy All Humans! 2	...		Budokai Tenkaichi 2	...				Fantasia	...		Harry Potter and	...	</										

Glitch In The System	•	Pac Man Rally	•	Risk	•	Speed Machines 3	•	The Godfather	•	Vietcong Purple Haze	•
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	•	Pac Man World 2	•	Road Kill	•	Speedboat GP	•	The Great Escape	•	Viewtiful Joe	•
Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence	•	Pacific Air Warriors II	•	Robotcop	•	Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy	•	The Hobbit	•	Viewtiful Joe 2	•
Metal Slug 3	•	Papazzzi	•	Robot Warlords	•	Spider-Man	•	The Hulk	•	VIP	•
Metal Slug 4	•	Paris Dakar 2	•	Robot Wars	•	Spider-Man 2 The Movie	•	The Incredible Hulk 2	•	Virtua Cop Elite Edition	•
Metal Slug 5	•	Parasazzi	•	Robotech	•	Splashdown	•	The Incredibles	•	Virtua Fighter 4	•
Metropolismania	•	Paris Saint-Germain	•	Robotech Battlecry	•	Splash Down 2	•	The Incredibles	•	Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution	•
Micro Machines V4	•	Club Football 2005	•	Robots	•	Riders Gone Wild	•	The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring	•	Virtua Tennis	•
Micro Machines	•	Paris-Dakar Rally	•	Rocket Power Beach Bandits	•	Spongebob Squarepants: Battle For Bikini Bottom	•	The Lord Of The Rings: The Third Age	•	Volleyball Challenge	•
Midnight Club	•	Paris-Marseille Racing 2	•	Rogue Trooper	•	Spongebob Squarepants: Creature From The Krusty Krab	•	The Mummy	•	Volleyball Xciting	•
Midnight Club 2	•	Perfect Ace 2	•	Rollercoaster World	•	Spy Fiction	•	The Nightmare Before Christmas	•		
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition	•	The Championships	•	Rolling	•	Spy Hunter	•	The Plan	•	Wallace & Gromit	•
Midway Arcade Treasures	•	Perfect Ace	•	Romance Of The Three Kingdoms VIII	•	Spy Vs Spy	•	The Punisher	•	'The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit'	•
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	•	Pro Tournament Tennis	•	Room Zoom - Race For Impact	•	Spyhunter 2	•	The Scorpion King: Rise Of An Akkadian	•	Walt Disney's Donald Duck Quack Attack	•
Midway Arcade Treasures 3	•	Peter Pan	•	RPM Tuning	•	Spyhunter Nowhere To Run	•	The Seed	•	War Of The Monsters	•
Mini Mini Desktop Racing	•	Phantasy Star Universe	•	RTL Skijumping 2005	•	Spyro A Hero's Tail	•	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	•	Warcraft	•
Minority Report	•	Piglets Big Game	•	RTL Skijumping 2007	•	SSX On Tour	•	The Sims	•	Warriors Of Might And Magic	•
Mister Mosquito	•	Pink Pong	•	RTL Wintergames 2007	•	Star Academy	•	The Sims 2	•	Way Of The Samurai 2	•
Mobile Light Force 2	•	Pippa Funnell Take The Reins	•	RTX Red Rock	•	Star Trek: Encounters	•	The Sims 2 Pets	•	We Love Kataman	•
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation Vs Zeon	•	Pirates Of The Caribbean: The Legend Of Jack Sparrow	•	Ruff Trigger	•	Star Trek: Voyager: Elite Force	•	The Sims Bustin' Out	•	Whiplash	•
ModernGroove:	•	Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	•	Rugby	•	Star Trek: Shattered Universe	•	The Sniper 2	•	Whirl Tour	•
Ministry Of Sound Edition	•	Play It Chess	•	Rugby 2004	•	Star Wars: Battlefront	•	The Sopranos:	•	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? 2nd Edition	•
Mojol	•	Play It Pinball	•	Rugby 2005	•	Star Wars: Battlefront II	•	Road To Respect	•	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? Party Edition	•
Monopoly Party	•	Playwize Poker And Casino	•	Rugby Challenge 2006	•	Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	•	The Spongobob Squarepants Movie	•	Wild Arms 3	•
Monster House	•	Police 24/7	•	Rugby League	•	Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter	•	The Urbz: Sims In The City	•	Winter Sports	•
Monster Hunter	•	Pool Master	•	Rugby League 2	•	Star Wars: Starfighter	•	The Warriors	•	Winx Club	•
Monster Jam	•	Poolshark 2	•	Rugrats Royal Ransom	•	Star Wars: Episode III The Revenge Of The Sith	•	The Weakest Link	•	Wipeout Fusion	•
Maximum Destruction	•	Pop Idol	•	Rumble Roses	•	State Of Emergency	•	Tiger Wood PGA Tour 2004	•	Without Warning	•
Monster Truck Arenas	•	Power Rangers Dino Thunder	•	Runabout 3	•	Stealth Forces	•	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	•	World Challenge	•
Special Edition	•	Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	•	Rune: Viking War Lord	•	Steamboat Chronicles	•	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	•	World Championship Pool 2004	•
Monster Truck - Offroad Edition	•	Powershot Pinball	•	Rygar	•	Steel Dragon EX	•	Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf 2005	•	World Championship Snooker 2003	•
Monsters, Inc.	•	Predator: Concrete Jungle	•	Saint Seiya Chapter Sanctuary	•	Stock Car Crash	•	Time Crisis 2	•	World Championship Snooker 2004	•
Mortal Kombat Deception	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 2	•	Saint Seiya The Hades	•	Stock Car Speedway	•	Timesplitters	•	World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	•
Mortal Kombat Mystification	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	•	Samurai	•	Stolen	•	Timesplitters 2	•	World Destruction League: Warjetz	•
Mortal Kombat Armageddon	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 5	•	Samurai Aces	•	Strawberry Shortcake	•	Timesplitters Future Perfect	•	World Fighting	•
Moto GP 2	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 6	•	Samurai Shodown V	•	The Sweet Dreams Game	•	Tokyo Extreme Racer Zero	•	World Poker Tour 2K6	•
Moto GP 3	•	Pro Evolution Soccer Management	•	Scaler	•	Street Dance	•	Tokyo Road Race	•	World Raging 2	•
Motorcross Mania 3	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 2003-4	•	Scarface: The World Is Yours	•	Street Fighter Alpha Anthology	•	Tom And Jerry In War Of The Whiskers	•	World Series Of Poker: World Series Of Poker: Tournament Of Champions	•
Motor Mayhem	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 2004/05	•	Scoby-Doo! Night Of 100 Frights	•	Street Fighter EX 3	•	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	•	World Snooker Championship 2005	•
Motorseige:	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 2006/07	•	Scoby-Doo! Unmasked	•	Street Gopher	•	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2	•	World Snooker Championship 2007	•
Warriors Of Prime Time	•	Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	•	Search And Destroy	•						



THE GAME
THAT WOULD BE

WORDS: MARK SERRELS

KING

Some games aspire to greatness; some games achieve greatness. A very select few, the absolute elite, manage to somehow elevate themselves beyond that – approaching the level of videogaming genius. These games are few and far between, usually limited to esteemed franchises like *Metal Gear Solid*, *Grand Theft Auto* and *Final Fantasy*; the kind of games that can define an entire generation of videogaming. This is what Ubisoft is aiming for, this is its target... this is *Assassin's Creed*.



The Need for Creed

"Nothing is true, everything is permitted". That was the actual motto of the real life assassin's brotherhood in the 12th century, and this phrase has been developed into a huge part of the game itself. This motto referred to the fact that back in the Third Crusade, there were no rules as to how Assassins disposed of their victims. *Assassin's Creed* integrates this motto into gameplay expertly. In the huge city environment, anything is possible, players can choose any path they see fit, and pretty much everything in the city is usable. If it juts out more than two centimetres, you can grip on to it, and use it to scale the city walls. Movements are context based, and there are apparently more than a thousand of them. Scaling the heights of the Holy Land is going to be pretty sweet as far as we can tell.



■ "Get 'im, he stole her majesty's underpants... yeah, that's right, the frilly ones she likes"

What more can you say? What can you say about a game that is aiming to redefine the parameters of next gen gaming? Of all the high profile games scheduled for the PS3, *Assassin's Creed* is perhaps the most alluring, the most mysterious, and almost certainly the most ambitious. Here's the concept: you are an assassin, sent to kill nine high profile targets in the midst of the Crusades. In a bustling city, heaving with civilians, you have been set loose in a completely interactive environment, which you can traverse in almost any way possible – there are no limits. With an intuitive context-based control system allowing you to make over 1000 different individual movements, Ubisoft's aim is clear: take what was once possible in the action genre, times it by a hundred, and watch everyone's heads explode.

At E3, where the game was first unveiled, that's pretty much what happened. Everyone was blown away by this new franchise that delivered so much, yet seemed to promise even more. The sheer scale of the environments, the amount of non-playable characters; there was no doubt that *Assassin's Creed* looked like a champion from the absolute get go. The only question was how good could this game potentially be? And from there, of course, the speculation began. Was the E3 demo running on a PC? Was *Assassin's Creed* a PS3 exclusive? Was the game some bizarre sci-fi time-travelling epic, or was it solely set in the 12th century? The Chinese whispers surrounding Ubisoft's masterpiece in the making spiralled into chaos, and the anticipation just grew and grew...

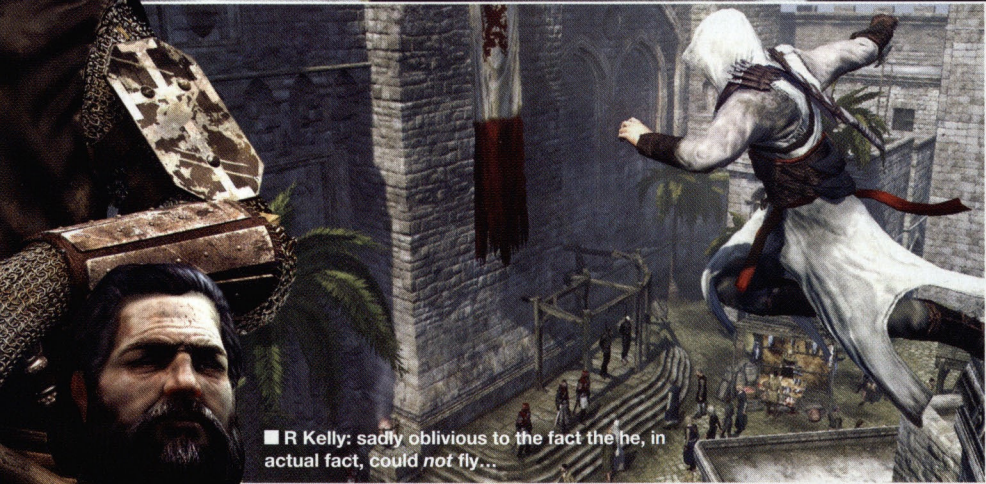
The Last Crusade

Now, with some distance and some perspective, it's a bit easier to talk about the details of *Assassin's Creed* without the hyperbole. The game, as always, looks ground breaking, but now with some background details on the story we can delve further. Since, as many of the top dogs involved in the project claim, *Assassin's* plot and gameplay blends into a seamless mixture of form and content, we feel it's about time we got into the guts of the actual storyline of *Assassin's Creed*.

Set during the Third Crusade, in the Holy Land, you play as Altair, a recently disgraced member of the Assassin's Order attempting to re-establish his previous high standing by assassinating nine dastardly individuals who have been using the Holy War to line their own pockets. Via this mission, and a series of



■ "DAMMIT!" said the medieval version of Jack Bauer, "you are going to tell me the location of the nuke! NOW!"



■ R Kelly: sadly oblivious to the fact the he, in actual fact, could not fly...



other events, Altair's goal is to put an end to the Third Crusade entirely.

At the beginning of the game Richard the Lionheart, King of England, has just taken a major city in the Holy Land, setting up a stronghold to aid him in his ultimate goal – marching south to take Jerusalem in the name of the English church. Meanwhile Muslim chief Saladin, a bit pissed regarding his latest series of defeats, has amassed a huge army in order to crush those dastardly poms once and for all. In the midst of the chaos, the men left to govern the various areas of the Holy Land have been taking advantage, profiting from the Holy War and the deaths of thousands. In *Assassin's Creed* these people are your enemies: those that would profit from the mass suffering of war.

Okay, take a deep breath and relax

– history class is over. The major point of this, however, and the reason we are making such a huge deal of the historical background, is that the level of research gone into making *Assassin's Creed* an accurate representation of the holy land in the 12th century is simply staggering. Everything is authentic; the producers have read up heavily on both the time period and the history of the Assassins. In short: they know their shit. What's most impressive about this, however, is the way in which Ubisoft has managed to integrate this genuinely historical experience with *Assassin's* unique game design, and still have the whole thing make perfect sense.

The huge hustle and bustle of the cities, the chaos surrounding you – what *Assassin's Creed* ultimately does best is give gamers the sense that, while your

actions undoubtedly have an affect on the environment, you are still simply a small piece of an entirely massive gaming world. The huge amount of research that has gone into making this game an accurate representation of its era gives *Assassin's* a level of authenticity that its peers simply cannot match. In the broadest sense, *Assassin's Creed* is a big game, with a big environment and, most importantly, some very big ideas.

The Son of None

In *Assassin's Creed* you play through the game as Altair, a disgraced Master Assassin who has been unceremoniously booted back down to the bottom of the assassin career ladder after failing a high profile mission. Altair's mission in the game, to assassinate the afore-mentioned high-profile pilferers of war, is his final

Boyz n the Hood

Altair seems mighty fond of that hood of his – does he ever take it off? The real answer to that question is why the hell should he? He's tough and he's an assassin for pete's sake! He can wear whatever the hell he wants. Here are some other groups who like to sport the 'hood' on occasion.



The KKK

Don't mess with these dudes, unless you like your skin char-grilled, on a cross. These guys SUCK, big time.

Weakness – Modern day attitudes to racism



The Jedi

Donning the 'hood' is a must for Jedi masters. If you don't wear one you seem less mysterious, and thus, less hard.

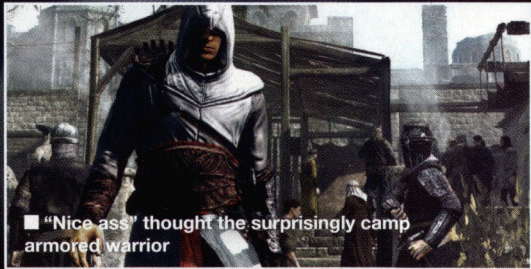
Weakness – Darth Vader



Surly Young Hooligans

Scary teenagers. Looking 'menacing'. Your Granny's worst nightmare.

Weakness – The English language



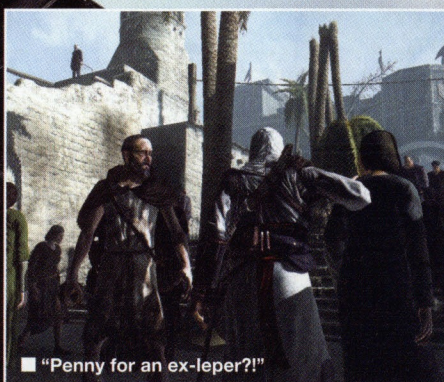
■ "Nice ass" thought the surprisingly camp armored warrior

Fingerless

Take a real close look at Altair's left hand — a very close look. Yep, that's right, the poor buggers missing his ring finger. Why? Well, as part of an ancient ritual, prospective assassins had to get one of their digits cut off. Partly as an initiation test, and partly for practical reasons, Altair had to lose a finger to enable his main weapon to work properly in the heat of battle. Disguised beneath his sleeve, Altair has a blade that, through some pretty advanced mechanics, is actually attached to his arm, and can be released at the flick of a switch, just before some poor bastard gets it in the neck. Silent but deadly.



■ Men in berets: if anyone deserves to die, it's these guys...



■ "Penny for an ex-leper?!"

chance to regain his previous standing and rise back to his title of Master.

Altair, which in Arabic roughly translates as 'son of none', is based on the fact that Altair is actually an orphan raised by the Assassin Brotherhood. As such he has dedicated his life to the art of killing, and is an all round murdering genius. Prior to his disgrace Altair attained the rank of 'Master Assassin' at an extremely young age, and as a result had become a little arrogant in his own self belief, and had begun to set himself above the Assassin Brotherhood.

Altair's character is a very important aspect of *Assassin's Creed*; there is an overriding story arc that Ubisoft is attempting to reflect in the actual gameplay, pushing the game beyond simple story-telling. At the beginning Altair is still cocky and arrogant, which is reflected in his style of killing, throughout the game however, he must learn to control his impulses in order to improve as an assassin and complete his mission. As Altair loses his status as a Master Assassin he learns humility and this enables him to become more measured in his killing style, ultimately making him a more efficient assassin all round.

Paid the cost to be the boss

And at the top of it all there is the head honcho, the big cahoot, the top Assassin, Al Mualim. Via some new info given to us by Ubisoft, we have been introduced to this as yet unheard of character, and he looks set to play a huge role in *Assassin's Creed*'s plot developments. Draped in mystery, Al Mualim is said to be simultaneously "feared, reviled, worshipped and loved"; the kind of charismatic personality that inspires followers and leaves his enemies cowering.

Prior to the storyline in the game Al Mualim actually segregated his own assassins from the rest of the Assassin brotherhood, striking out on his own with a new group. He is also rumoured to be Altair's father, and is one of the most powerful men in the Holy Land. His influence is widespread to the extent that some fear that he may possibly be plotting to become the ruler of the Holy Land himself, and we suspect these ambitions might have a huge part to play in the game itself. Possibly taking on a kind of 'Big Boss-esque' role in *Assassin's Creed*, we

can't wait to see what comes of this intriguing character.

Ubisoft really has the cream of its already creamy crop working on *Assassin's Creed*, and considering that Ubisoft has been one of the most prolific games publishers of late, we are positively drooling at the thought of what its best developers are capable of when they put their heads together, particularly with the team behind the original 3D iteration of *Prince of Persia* behind the scenes. The resources that are being thrown behind this game are such that it's difficult to imagine how this game could be anything short of dazzling.

In addition to the considerable design talent, Ubisoft has also recruited wunderkind screenwriter Corey May, and although this name may be unfamiliar to you, rest assured he has some plans for *Assassin's* that may well change the way in which stories are told in videogames.

What Ubisoft is attempting to do with *Assassin's Creed* is eliminate the need for cut-scenes to advance the story. The story will develop as you play as opposed to *after* you play. Gameplay will not halt in order for bogus plot exposition, or lame dialogue a la *Metal Gear Solid* or *Final Fantasy*. The script writers and the designers themselves have been working in tandem in an attempt to fuse both story and gameplay into an immersive, yet involving videogame experience. It is Ubisoft and Corey May's belief that videogaming is lagging behind in terms of story, and both intend to realise the potential of gaming as a storytelling medium without removing any interactivity within the game.

From what we've seen everything about *Assassin's Creed* looks set to be completely epic. The storyline is epic, the environments are epic, but best of all the ambition of this game, what Ubisoft is attempting to create with *Assassin's Creed*, is epic. The next generation is upon us, and it's about time that developers acted like it, instead of rehashing the same old ideas with hi-res graphics. Ubisoft has set out to reinvent an entire genre for a new generation, with updated graphics and controls to match, and we think it can achieve its goal. *Assassin's Creed* may well end up being the benchmark by which action is judged from here on out; here's hoping it fulfils its awesome potential. **A**



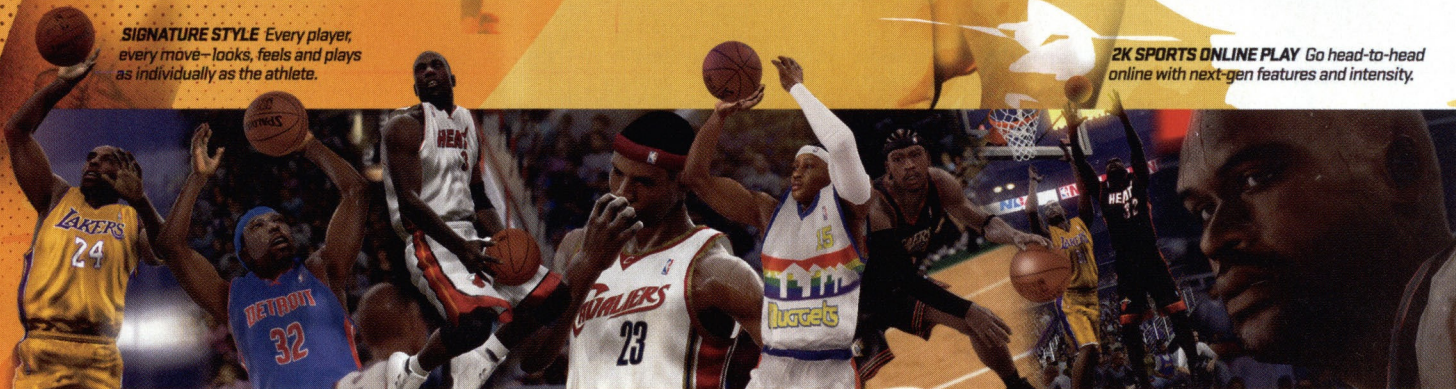
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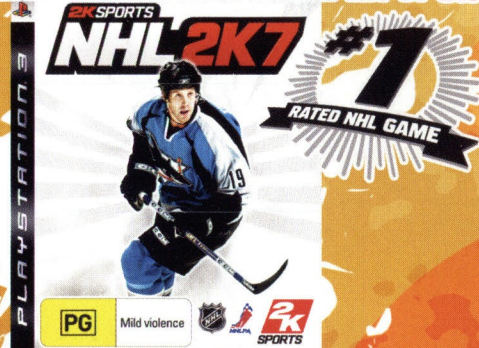



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UNDER SNAKE'S SKIN

WORDS: GERARD WARD

Solid Snake doesn't have much time left, so you best believe he's going to use every single second he's got in the upcoming *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*



When the entire gaming craze was all about shooters, one producer dared to buck the trend and attempt something fresh. Instead of mindlessly shooting your enemies, why not simply sneak around them? While this concept was initially turned down by his peers, *Metal Gear* eventually became a reality, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Creating an innovative game is incredibly risky for both the designer and the developer. But every now and then it works so well, it revolutionizes the way people want to play games. Not only that, but games subsequent to it are left in its wake, desperately trying to mimic its success.

Such is the story of *Metal Gear Solid*. Devised back in 1987 for the MSX2 computer, Konami released the first of what was set to be an explosively contagious franchise. Now with over 100 staff, games on all three PlayStations, and a fan base large enough to form a full-scale army, Kojima Productions is working on its newest and arguably most highly anticipated title yet for the PlayStation 3 – *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*.

We sat down with the creator of *Metal Gear*, Hideo Kojima, after his speech at the Perth GO3 convention, to talk about *Metal Gear Solid 4*.

OPS: The *Metal Gear Solid* series has influenced a gaming genre based on stealth. Now that there is “nowhere to hide” in *Metal Gear Solid 4*, will the game be less stealthy and a lot more non-stop action?

Hideo Kojima: No, not actually. It's going to be a stealth hide and seek game. But a hide and seek game in a warzone, and there'll be a lot of different ways that you'll have to hide yourself in a warzone. So it will remain a stealth game.

OPS: Is *MGS4* going to take longer to complete, since it's the last of the series? Are fans going to be satisfied by the end of their favourite series?

HK: I can't really reveal how long the play time is. However I can say that it will be a satisfying challenge for users. Talking about inside the game for *MGS4*, from all the 20 years that we have including *MGS3* and the PSP (*MGS: Portable Ops*) version, all of the story will come together. We're going to have all of the elements come in for *MGS4*, so I think that the fans will be pretty satisfied.

OPS: You've said that creating the engine for *MGS3* took about a year to make, since it was more than just the corridor levels. What about *MGS 4*? How long did it take you to start building it up to date, and what's it like developing for the PlayStation 3?

HK: Basically it took a similar amount of time to create the basic research for *MGS4*. It took about one or maybe one and a half years. And to answer your

question about PS3 specifically... nowadays it's hi-res, we need high quality in everything, and it's really a hell of a lot of work. We have to create so many things. Like for instance, for the hand on one character, we have to re-create all the joints. So everything we have to do, one by one, is really difficult.

OPS: What has been the most time-consuming making in *MGS4* – the graphics, or the design?

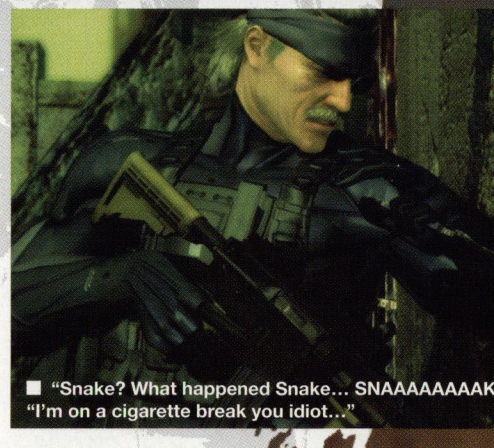
HK: Well I have to say really honestly recreating a warzone and making it into a game, and to make it a fun game, is very difficult. Also creating the standards of high quality backgrounds, characters, everything. The graphic elements are really difficult as well.

OPS: How will the PSP interact with *MGS4*?

HK: Well it's still a big secret, but I can say that there will be some elements that will link together and you will have to use it.

OPS: What downloadable features will *MGS4* have after release, and how will multiplayer evolve from *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*?

HK: Well on the online aspect in *MGS4*... it is going to be kind of a real big kickoff of *Metal Gear* online. We're doing it right now, experimenting, and I promise you it will take a big role, the online aspect, will take on a big role in the game. If you



■ “Snake? What happened Snake... SNAAAAAAAAAAK
“I’m on a cigarette break you idiot...”



■ Big Gay Robots – what they do in their own time is totally fine with us



look at *MGS3: Subsistence* as a core, we're going to expand this. Not just versus battle, but we're going to expand as much as possible and a lot of people will be able to connect.

OPS: Have there been any compromises that you've had to make on *MGS4* that you wish could have made the game?

HK: It's a tough question. A lot of things actually. Like for instance graphics. We set a bar within the team, that we want to achieve a certain level, and already we've had to lower the bar so that the gameplay is more advanced, so there are many places that we kind of compromised.

OPS: In your speech, you were talking about the hopes for the next generation gaming. Do you think it's heading in the right direction, and what do you think games are lacking at the moment?

HK: Well, I don't know if it's the correct way that I personally want to be creating games, expanding actually, but what I can say is my dream, one by one, slowly by slowly over the years is expanding and allowing me to do many things. This has been the case for the past 20 years. I'm a person who doesn't want to stick to doing something constantly. I want to move on to a lot of things. And even if you look at *Metal Gear* it might look like the same game, however implementing new technologies, means creating new

jobs, and meeting new people. That's something really new, and that's what's kept me going over the years. And this will continue. What's kind of sad is 20 years ago, you know, only one person could create a game, like program, graphics and everything and have a whole lot of fun. But nowadays, the team is like more than 100 people, meaning it's broken up into pieces. One team does the graphics, another team does the programming, meaning you cannot do

"all the elements come in for MGS4, so I think that the fans will be pretty satisfied"

everything. So that's kind of sad.

OPS: What other kind of genres are you interested in after *MGS4*? What else do you enjoy?

HK: Well I have a tendency to like action games, so I'd like to maybe go on and create a totally new action game that no one has ever seen before. I do like adventure games as well, so I would like to create adventure games, maybe even in a smaller unit, like five or six people, almost like a minor movie and not the major Hollywood ones, that kind of thing. I'd like to do that.

OPS: Will Kojima Productions be getting involved in making movies based on the games? We heard *Metal Gear* is set to be made into a film.

HK: Well I cannot really say about the movie because it involves many other parties, so I personally cannot really speak about the movie, but we are driving forward on the movie with Sony Pictures, and it's still under negotiations right now, but it's proceeding well.

OPS: You've said that your team is now making the film sequences for *MGS4*. How is the PS3 handling the cinematic scenes so far?

HK: What I would like to do is of course do the cinematic sequence in real time, however I am planning to add new things right now to the cinematic demo. It's a demo, but it's very abstract, the player can kind of interact with it or play with it. So the player has a choice, he or she can sit down and watch the full demo, or he or she could like kind of fiddle around with it. And we can't really say really specifically right now, but that's kind of

the new thing we're challenging right now. It's really creative. I thought I would just give up but we're continuing...

OPS: *Metal Gear* is focused around war. This perhaps can be looked at as a message you're saying about war in general. Is that true? Has *Metal Gear* been an outlet of how you feel against war and the military and whatnot?

HK: My parents actually experienced the war, so it's very natural that my message is actually in the game, and it's more like a part of it. I have to really put that message in, but I understand that some gamers are not really interested in my message. I don't get too worried because I'm not going to put that message in so strongly. I'm going to probably make it so that after you play the game, you'll kind of get it gently.

OPS: Kojima-san, thank you for your time.

HK: No problem.

So there you have it. This will be the last *Metal Gear Solid*. Well, at the very least, the last one directed by Hideo Kojima as far as he can see. Due for Japanese release in late 2007, the crew at Kojima Productions will surely have another gem on its hands. More specifically, we're all counting the days until we have a copy of this gem in our hands when it hits Australian shelves in March 2008.

WORDS: MARK SERRELS

The Truth is out There...

Videogaming's urban legends: for the past three days they have haunted us, creeping us out, giving us the heebie jeebies, huddled over our desks, stinking of coffee and raw man sweat, tapping our keyboards incessantly... all in the name of the truth.

Gaming myths have been around from the very beginning. Some born of 'hilarious' April Fool's gags that gamers took a little too seriously, others via a subtle twisting of glitches, and some the result of baseless internet chatter. Anyone who ever played *Streetfighter 2* over and over again in a vain attempt to unlock 'Sheng Long' understands the pain and misery of the gaming urban myth. We're downright sick of the mystery. We want the truth and we can handle the truth! Thankfully the truth is out there... all you have to do is look closely...

Final Fantasy VII

Background

"Aeris... DAMMIT! So innocent... so cute in her little flowery dress... what did she do to deserve this... why did she have to die... TAKE ME! TAKE ME SEPIROTH! SPARE AERIS... WHY!!!! YOU NO GOOD BASTARD!! WHYYYYY... Why did she have to leave me all alone..." (dissolves into tears).

This was the hysterical reaction of most *Final Fantasy* fanboys when da 'baddest man on da planet', Sephiroth, decided to impale Aeris on his enormous sword (ooh matron). Gamers worldwide threw their arms dramatically to the skies and mourned (except us, those weren't tears - there was something in our eye). Despite her death gamers couldn't let her go, they couldn't let poor Aeris rest in peace. Instead they proceeded to scour the game endlessly, obsessively looking for ways to resurrect the poor girl, or possibly turn her dead body into some bizarre Franken-Aeris. Whatever - the whole thing was needlessly morbid.

Rumors spread quickly of all kinds of bizarre methods players could use to bring Aeris back to life. Some believed if you changed her name to 'Juliet' she would survive the battle with Sephiroth, some claimed that bizarre combinations of the L3 and R3 buttons would save her life. Some idiots actually believed that treating other characters badly would result in Sephiroth killing them instead. There were literally hundreds of theories, all equally ridiculous, espousing different ways in which you can bring sweet little Aeris back to life. Our advice? Don't waste your time...

The truth...

Some theories actually proposed that the original plan for the *FFVII* storyline was for Aeris to come back as ghost and help Cloud defeat Sephiroth in the final battle of the game. As strange as this may sound, there is actually some evidence of this in the game itself. Apparently if you backtrack to the church in the Midgar slums, after Aeris dies, you can see her ghost tending flowers. If you approach however, she vanishes into thin air... spooky...



CASE #1



GTA: San Andreas

Background

A combination of the huge game map, and the game's seemingly endless collection of secrets and 'Easter eggs', has caused *San Andreas* to contain quite possibly the most endless list of urban myths of any game ever made. The most prominent of these myths, however, is the apparent presence of the infamous Bigfoot. Yep that's right, apparently if you search hard enough you will actually find that elusive hairy man-monster (once again... Oooh Matron) somewhere in the dark depths of Rockstar's masterpiece.

Gamers have spent hours looking for a glimpse of Bigfoot, spurred on by the numerous photoshopped pics scattered across the internet. A PlayStation mag in the UK even had the gall to offer a \$120 reward to the first gamer to take a decent screenshot of the Yeti, but whether this was a genuine offer, or a prank designed to add fuel to the fire, we'll never know...

The Truth...

Nowadays it's pretty much common knowledge that there is no Bigfoot in *GTA: San Andreas*, but there are still some whisperings on the net regarding his presence. Apparently one hacker was so obsessed with the idea of *GTA's* Bigfoot that he actually searched through the actual gaming code of the PC version in a vain attempt to find some trace of the big fella. Sadly he found nothing.

The myth lives on however, and many gamers have created some mildly entertaining video clips of their search for Bigfoot and posted them on www.youtube.com. Most of these actually feature PC mods in which code-savvy gamers have created their own Bigfoot and placed him within the game itself. Well worth a look for the curious Yeti hunters amongst you.

CASE #2

CASE #3

Naked Chicks

Background

Girls without clothes: awesome, unless said girl weighs 500 pounds, or was born before 1940. Even then it's, at the very least, slightly humorous and weirdly amusing. In short, most gamers love nudity and as such have spent many an hour trying to find ways to make videogame chicks take their clothes off.

For the most part they have been completely unsuccessful, but most gamers jaws unhinged at the mandible when shots of Lara Croft naked in the original *Tomb Raider* surfaced on the net. As a result there was a mass scramble for these 'nude codes' and those crazy internet pranksters had a whale of a time inventing insanely complicated code combinations for the hordes of salivating teenagers fiending for a glimpse of Lara's naked flesh.

But she's not the only hot chick gamers are interested in. There were apparently nude codes for Claire Redfield in *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* (hubba hubba), and a playable Jenna Jamieson (also naked of course...) in *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*. But before you guys turn rabid and starting chewing the magazine out of sheer sexual frustration, here's the truth...

The Truth...

Sadly, the Lara Croft nude codes were a complete ruse; there were a couple of reasons for the wide-spread rumours. Firstly, there were actual cheat codes in the original *Tomb Raider*, just not nude ones, which confused and frustrated many. Secondly, those smart arse modders had been at it again, creating half assed patches where Lara Croft could actually appear to be nude, but the whole thing just looks completely crap (trust us - we were actually horny enough to check).

There is, however, a slight grain of truth to the *Resident Evil* code, if you play through and complete the game quickly enough, you are able to play through the game again, complete with Claire Redfield in a skimpy bikini! Well, we guess it's not outright nudity, but hey - there's always pornography!



Cold Case...

Alternate ending in *Shadow of the Colossus*? Sadly no. You only have one, just be thankful it's pretty awesome.

Ability to drive an Escudo on its hind wheels at speeds reaching 1000 km/h in *Gran Turismo 3*? Amazingly this urban legend is actually true!

Apparently the character Rikku from *FFX* and *FFX-2* was originally a lesbian, but the English translators were forced to downplay this in the translation!

If you stand in a graveyard long enough in *GTA: San Andreas* the ghost of CJ's mother appears. Absolute balderdash.

Words: Mark Serrels

BACK FROM THE DEAD

Tony... what happened to you? You used to be the King, man. The kids loved you. You were the Birdman. You took on videogaming single-handedly. You did a giant-ass human dart grind all over your competition and no one else could even come close. Now look at you... Now the only 'King' you resemble is a fat, bloated '70s Elvis in a tight fitted jumpsuit, eagerly attempting to convince 'da kidz' that you've still got it. Well Birdman – do ya still got it? Do ya?

Yes? Then prove it.

We're sceptical. Now there's a new kid on the block, Skate by EA, and he's all about 'keeping it real'. He's got the people interested with a new approach to skating that's all about 'real' skating, 'real' tricks, with 'real' skaters. Watcha gonna do, Tony? You gonna lie down while this little punk rich kid swagger-jacks you all over the place with his new ideas, and his fancy controls? Or are you going to come out swinging and promptly restamp your authority all over the skating genre?

Watcha gonna do Birdman? Watcha gonna do?



■ 'Grinding' in 'bowls': George Michael's favourite pastime...



kay, apologies in advance for that hideous attempt at talking jive. To answer the previous question, the Birdman is going to do what any self-respecting skater would do in this situation – he's going to pick himself up, dust himself off, get right back on the board and show the world why *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* is one of the greatest videogame franchises the world has ever seen. Of course the series has seen better days, but the upcoming release of EA's *Skate* has put a fire in Neversoft's belly. EA may have awoken a sleeping

giant, and could learn to rue the consequences of taking on the Birdman on his home turf.

Tony Hawk 9 is undoubtedly the game that has the best chance of rekindling the greatness that the *THPS* franchise once had. After an exclusive first-look at the new direction Activision has decided to take, we are convinced that you won't be disappointed with how the series is going to redefine videogame skating.

Environmental Issues

Any skater knows that, in videogames especially, *where* you skate, is almost as important as *how* you skate, and to say that Activision has cranked it up a notch in this department is a major understatement. Set in the east coast of the USA, *Tony Hawk 9* has the largest gaming area ever seen in the franchise to date.

There are three major cities in *Tony Hawk 9*: Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington DC, and trust us when we say the skating potential of these environments is through the roof. Each city has taken actual famous skating

landmarks and integrated them into the city environment, making the game map seem skateable, yet organic. Better yet, Activision has managed to make each city completely linked to one another. You can grind your way through the subway to reach Washington, for example, or ollie majestically over the port into Baltimore via Philly. The whole design is so well thought out that the whole environment is seamlessly integrated, while allowing each city to retain its own individual identity.

This game, however, is not restricted solely to outdoor city

environments. One of our all-time favourite *Tony Hawk* maps was the thoroughly 'tubular' 'Airport' level from *THPS3*, which allowed gamers to take part in all manner of crazy skating within an indoor environment, grinding 'til ye could grinds no more. *Tony Hawk 9* seems to have created a worthy successor to this with Washington DC's National Air and Space Museum, all of which is completely accessible, and totally skateable. It looks set to be an incredible indoor environment that harks back to the water-tight level design featured in earlier *THPS* titles.



■ That is one bigass skatepark....



The Holy Trinity

But the major innovation in *Tony Hawk 9* has nothing to do with great level design or mass-scale environments. In Activision's latest baby the most significant change is featured in the skaters themselves. Neversoft has attempted to add a slight RPG-esque element to gameplay that, as opposed to bogging gamers down in a mire of stat-based tomfoolery, actually gives players the freedom to develop their characters develop while working their way through the single-player experience.

Sound complicated? Well, in practise it's quite simple, and not restricting in any shape or form. Basically there are three different ways in which your skater can develop: as a 'hardcore' skater, a 'rigger', or a career 'skater'. Each have their own abilities which can be developed over the course of the game. You are not restricted to any one path and can jump between the three at any time you choose. 'Career' skaters, for example, are experts at 'nailing the trick'. Using the function introduced in the last *Tony Hawk's* game, players can develop their ability to land increasingly complicated tricks by utilising the 'nail the trick' mechanic, and other new additions such as 'nail the grab' and 'nail the manual'.

Typically, 'hardcore' skaters take a different approach. It is their job to 'stick

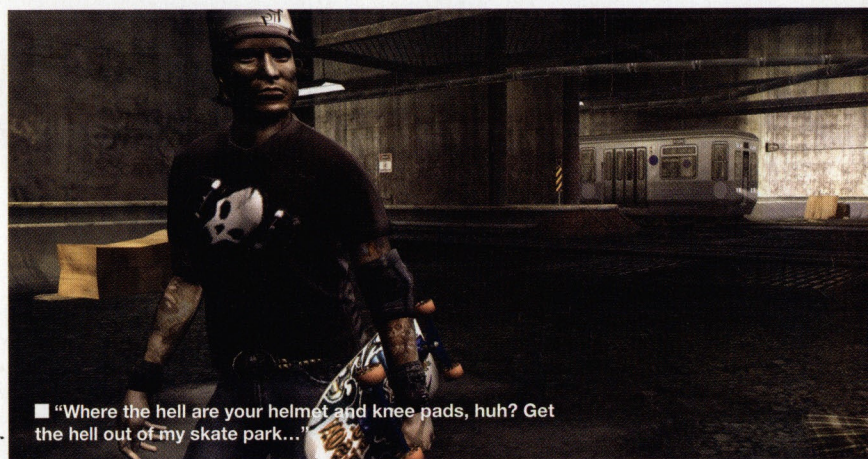
it the man' and 'get rowdy' whenever possible. They also sport numerous tattoos and attempt to constantly look 'menacing'. Not too much is known about their specific abilities as of yet, but one feature of the hardcore skater is the ability to land full-on power-clotheslines on security guards if they attempt to stop you skating. Like other features this skill is upgradeable, and we've been told that talented players can send up to three security guards flying with one single body check as you develop to full 'hardcore' capacity.

'Riggers' undoubtedly have the crappiest name of the three, but retain some of the most flexible and interesting abilities. Utilising the park editor features seen in previous *Hawk* games, 'riggers' can adjust and change the actual gaming environment as they see fit, cranking an area's skate potential up to 11 and beyond. Again, like the other features, this ability is upgradeable. In the beginning adjustments of the environment are limited to crappily 'pushing' over a billboard to make a half-assed ramp, later however you can begin building full-on half pipes and the likes for your skating pleasure. Best of all, these adjustments to the game environment aren't temporary, in fact they are saved on to the map permanently, which leads us to another huge innovation in the *Tony Hawk 9* brings to the franchise: user created content.



Never-ending Stories

In an attempt to combine the linear storylines of later *THPS* games with the free skating of earlier iterations, the latest version has nine major storylines that gamers can play through. Each storyline is specific to a certain style of skating, i.e. 'career', 'hardcore' or 'rigger', and allows you to develop your skills in that direction. Completing 'rigger' storylines, for example, will enable you to build more of your own personal skate ramps, and finishing 'career' missions will add finesse to your technical skills. And gamers don't need to focus on one aspect - you can have mini missions from all nine storylines active at once, enabling players to develop their skills in a very specific manner.

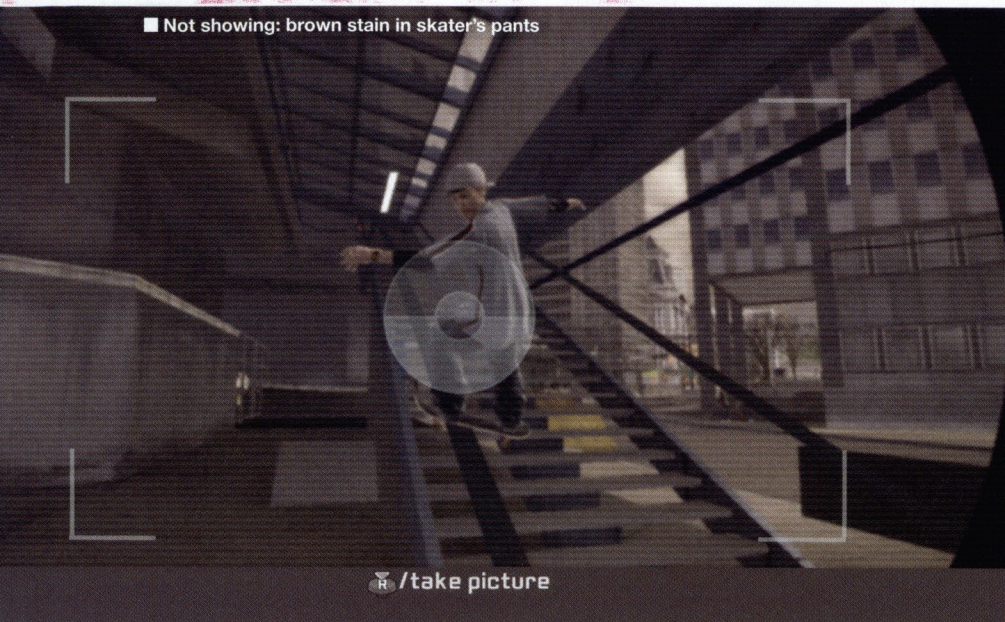


■ "Where the hell are your helmet and knee pads, huh? Get the hell out of my skate park..."



■ Finally... proof that pigs can fly...

■ Not showing: brown stain in skater's pants



⌂ /take picture

Skate to Create

Adjustments to the game's environments look set to play a huge part in this idea of user created content, but a more important dimension of this concept lies in a new feature exclusive to *Tony Hawk 9*: the use of a surprisingly in-depth video editor.

This video editor allows gamers to create the sort of badass, deviant skate videos that are essential to the real skating experience. In the world of skating you are only as good as your last video, and *Tony Hawk 9* tries to integrate this element into the game by allowing players to position cameras in-game, and record yourself performing the sort of insane tricks that the game has become famous for. Once these videos have been recorded and edited to your specifications you can then upload them to your friends via the PlayStation Network.

So far, so good, but what surprised us most about this whole concept was how sophisticated the video editor in *Tony Hawk 9* actually is. The features available are almost overwhelming, and it's fair to say that even most editing experts will be thoroughly impressed with the variety and choice in the package. You can add filter effects to the video, cut and paste footage from different tricks, use slo-mo, add music, fade in the music, cut the music: the opportunities are endless. If you wanted to spend a whole weekend shooting and editing the perfect skate video, you conceivably could: the video editor is that in-depth.

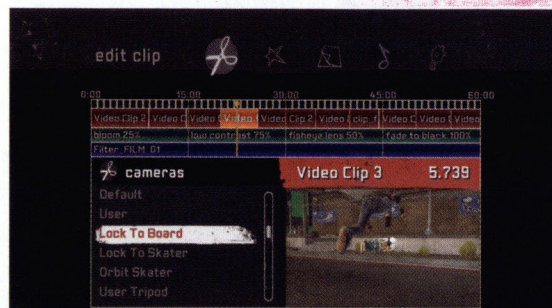
But for those worried that the *Tony Hawk* franchise is stretching beyond its comfort zone and feel that a return to the old school is required, Activision has you covered. The time-based, objective levels that formed the basis of what are generally considered the greatest *Hawk* games (*THPS2* and *THPS3*), also make a welcome appearance in *Tony Hawk 9*. If you happen to find an Arcade machine somewhere in the sprawling urban cityscape of Philly, Baltimore or D.C. you can immediately transport yourself to a time when things were simpler; when *Tony Hawk*

wasn't bogged down with bizarre platforming elements, or stat-based RPG bufoonery.

Taking part in these arcade challenges feels like playing *Tony Hawk* in the old days, when all you had to worry about was collecting the secret tape, or collecting the elusive S-K-A-T-E before your two minutes was up. Yep, that's right, even fans of baseless nostalgia haven't been forgotten about, you can partake in the simple two minute gameplay challenges that the *THPS* series initially became famous for.

Tony Hawk 9 has all bases sewn up.

This game looks set to be the ultimate *Hawk* experience, combining all the best elements of past entries with some new features that could turn out to be revolutionary. But the question remains: can the Birdman shed some pounds and become the lithe, athletic gaming experience of old? We say yes. By announcing *Skate* it seems that EA has lit a fire underneath Activision and Neversoft that could quite possibly explode into an all out inferno. There was a time when this series was complacent in its own success – not any more. It's once more eager to push the boundaries of the genre it invented, and we can't wait to see the results. 🛹



Nail the 'Chick'

Contrary to their miniscule presence in *THPS* there are actually plenty of female skaters involved in the sport, and some of them are pretty hot. Elissa Steamer is obviously the most famous, but sadly she has a face like she's been chewing a wasp, slowly, whilst sucking on a lemon. There are a couple of hotties though. Check these bad boys (er, we mean girls) out...



Lauren Perkins

One of only eight female skaters competing at the last X Games, Lauren is a feisty little number. Her motto? Never give up. Don't worry we won't.



Evelien Bouilliant

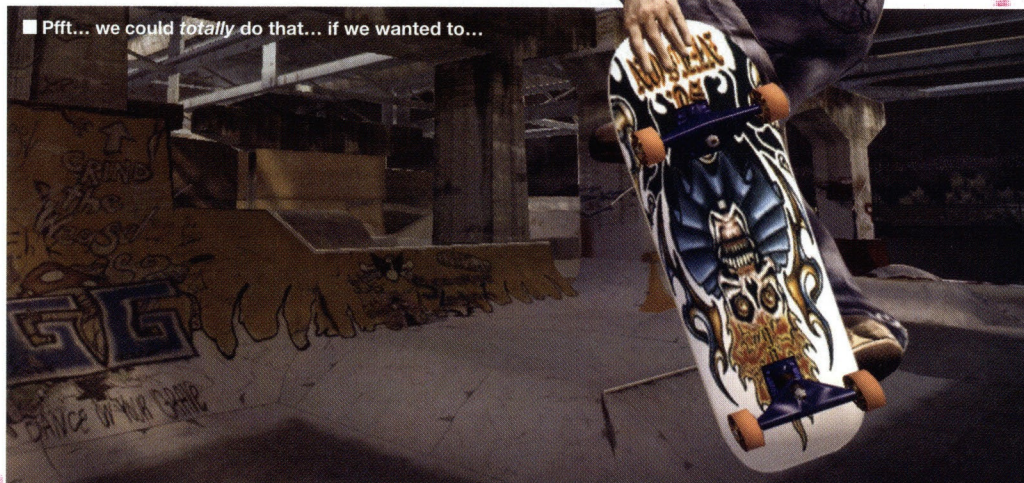
At only 16, she's pretty bad ass, but possibly jail bait. She's also from Belgium, which means she can give us chocolate. Wait, do Belgium do the chocolate or the banks? We can't remember...



Vanessa Torres

Regularly finishing on top... of skating leaderboards throughout the globe, is in it to "represent", and cares not a jot about the money. Best skate-chick in the business.

■ Pfft... we could totally do that... if we wanted to...



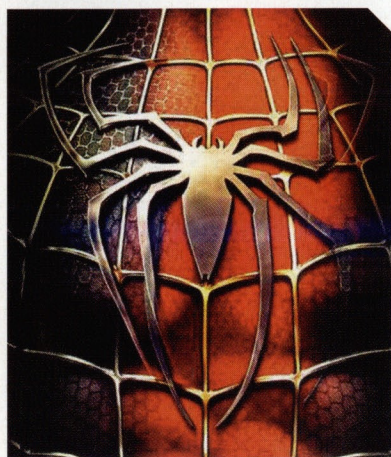
■ Caption

ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, Gamer of the Month and more!

WHAT'S NEW?

The latest PlayStation Store goodies



Spider-Man 3 Trailer

Want to see Spider-Man and Venom beating the holy crap out of each other in glorious 1080p? No? Are you blind, mentally disabled? Because this trailer is beyond awesome, download it now before you're beat up and called a 'sissy boy'.



LittleBigPlanet

This quirky little number has to be seen to be believed. Running in Hi-Def the you can appreciate the subtle yet sophisticated physics system that revolutionises the gameplay. If any game ever had the potential to offer up insane amounts of flatout fun it's this one.

ALSO AVAILABLE

Go! Sudoku
Ratchet & Clank Future trailer
Super Rub-a-Dub demo
Shrek the Third trailer
f!Ow
Major League Baseball 2K8 demo

LATEST FIRMWARE = 1.70

To make the most out of your PS3 you'll need the latest firmware. Here's a look at what firmware version 1.60 and the more recent 1.70 offers PS3 users.

Background downloading – Version 1.60 delivers a far more convenient process for downloading content. Instead of staring at a download screen while you wait for stuff to download, up to six items from the PlayStation Store can be queued up and downloaded while you play games, browse the web or use the other media functions, including photo viewing and music and video playback. Progress of downloads can be tracked under the new 'Download Management' menu under the Cross Media Bar's Network icon.

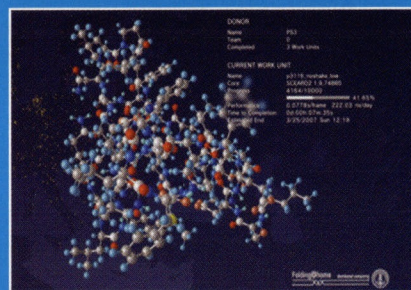
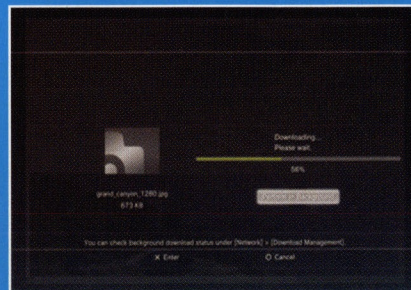
Folding@home – The Folding@home project allows PS3 users to connect to Stanford University Folding@home project, a distributed computing project that uses the power of idle PS3s to research protein folding mechanisms in the hope that this will lead to medical treatments for related diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and many cancers.

Remote Play – This feature allows you to access photos, videos, and music on your PS3's hard drive from a nearby PSP.

Disc Auto-Start – A new option under 'System Settings' allows you to choose whether or not a disc should start automatically upon inserting the disc or turning on your PS3 system.

Backwards Compatibility – Version 1.60 features the Backwards Compatibility software for around 2,800 PSone and PS2 titles.

- Ability to play downloaded PS1 games on PS3
- PS2 Dualshock now has 'rumble' features when used with the PS3
- Saves accrued whilst playing PS1 games on PS3 can be transferred to the PSP
- Bluetooth keyboard and mouse support
- Full size on-screen QWERTY keyboard
- Enhanced web browsing with improved zoom
- Tool to reduce flicker when the PS3 system is using interlaced video (480i or 1080i).
- New avatar icons
- Pictures over 1MB can be sent in messages



HOW TO UPDATE

There are three ways of updating your PS3.

1 System Update: If your PS3 is connected to the network you can easily update it via the PS3's 'System Update' feature.

2 PC: If you're not able to do this you can update it using a PC. Download the update data and save it on some form of storage media and insert it into your PS3. Copy the update data across and perform the upgrade. Download the data from here: http://au.playstation.com/support/ps3/faqs/ps3_FAQ_system_update_features.html

3 Games: Failing that you can update using disc media, using the firmware that is included on a game disc. We've been informed that most games released subsequent to launch will feature the most recent updates available.

FIRMWARE REQUESTS

Wallpapers

– The PSP has wallpaper support. Why doesn't the PS3? It just doesn't make any sense.

Access to the Cross-Media Bar in-game

– Having to quit out to message a friend or see what your buddies are playing is a real pain in the arse. Access to this info and improved messaging seems like a must to us.

Backwards Compatibility

– Keep it coming. There are a few local games that aren't working yet. Also, *Gran Turismo 4* doesn't work either. Somebody may want to get on that, you know, it's only one of the most popular PS2 games... we don't know, ever?

Any others ideas? Send them to ops@derwentward.com.au and we'll print them right here.

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN ONLINE

Impossible to resist...

■ Developer: INSOMNIAC ■ Publisher: SONY ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 40

Having had the good fortune to play on the Japanese/American server and the Australian/NZ one it has to be said: *Resistance* online is the cat's pyjamas, the bee's knees and the duck's guts all mashed together.

You can choose Ranked Games which will point you in the direction of people of a similar skill level, or Unranked which is pretty much a free-for-all.

Obviously Deathmatch is the game du jour – as it only requires yourself – but we'd advise gamers out there not to ignore the goodness of Team-based games like Assault, Conversion and Meltdown – where you have to hunt down and destroy the opposing Team's reactor. It's especially fun if you are Chimera, L2 will have you in rage mode where you can sense other players and move like the clappers.

A warning though to local players – we have

played against the Japanese and American players and they've had *Resistance* for months to get really good at it. So when it goes global you'd best "bring it". We suggest forming clans and keeping an eye out for players of a high skill level to invite to the clan you've formed.

Playing *Resistance* Aussie/NZ online isn't as cool as we expect it to get when it goes worldwide but it's still damn good. And come on Aussie gamers – try team-based games, they really are a hoot. Oh and that guy that finds the sniper rifle on every level and hides, shooting people? You sir, are a big fat tool.

In summary: Awesome game with awesome online that keeps on getting free updates. What's not to love? **JB AO**

★★★★★



MOTORSTORM

Get online. Get dirty.

■ Developer: EVOLUTION ■ Publisher: SONY ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 12

MotorStorm is the filthy poster boy of easy-peesy online play. Provided you've been honest in regards to your geography during registration and haven't claimed to be a H. Munster living somewhere in Mozambique, you'll be able to select between the Australian/New Zealand lobby and the rest of the world – the former obviously the best option for lag-free play – and get your game on.

Racing players in your Friends list is also a breeze thanks to an option that allows you to see who's online and what they're up to. It's something we'd advise you to check, too, as *MotorStorm* can be quite the lonely affair when playing folk you don't know. While the races are just as smooth

as they are offline, there's little interaction via headsets, no teamwork required, and no need to change your driving strategy based on whom you're racing. Unless you're taking on your mates and can score post-match bragging rights, racing nobodies is too similar to taking on the PS3's drones.

Still, with an online ranking system that marks you from Hero to Zero and robust network code, *MotorStorm* demands to be taken out for a power slide round the online arena; though with only 11 other racers to take on across mammoth tracks, it's better if you know who you're racing against. **JB JE**

★★★★★

GAMER OF THE MONTH



Want to be simultaneously loved, worshipped and adored by your peers? Well now you can! We are planning to immortalise one lucky PS3 gamer from Australia or New Zealand on this page each month.

Want to be the OPS Gamer of the Month? Tell us why at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or meet us online. Only the bestest and most awesomest may apply...

And don't forget you can also use your PS3's web browser to log on to www.habbo.com.au and check out the Juicy Fruit Beach Café for your chance to win \$250 worth of games. See page 21 for details.

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THQ

Action and Strategic
Gameplay Come Together!

Japan has divided into
Warring States and you
must resurrect a nation!

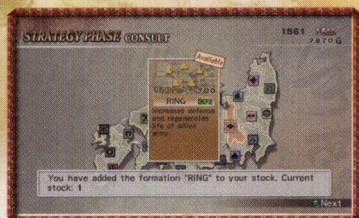
At each war council,
consult with your officers to
decide upon military and
political affairs, then march
into enemy territory to
reunite the country.

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Create your own Warrior in
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PlayStation²

DOLBY
DIGITAL
PRO LOGIC II

OUT
NOW



DOLBY
DIGITAL
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Produced by
Omega Force



Moderate
violence

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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

PlayStation®
Official Magazine Australia
**GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



WELCOME

Biggest surprise this month? Perhaps it's Dave actually finishing *Oblivion* (dude hasn't seen the sun all month)? Or maybe it's Anthony loving *Vegas* (it's got NO aliens in it)? Or how about *SBK-07* NOT sucking

(it's actually actually quite good)? The last four weeks have been packed full of surprises. And public holidays...

I don't know where I was going with that. I guess that's not surprising.

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

THE OPS AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

"...if you can imagine it, you can achieve it"

Find out why *Oblivion* is the new benchmark for epic adventure – **page 82**

PS3



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS

Team Rainbow paint the town red! – **page 86**

- **Armored Core 4** **p.90**
- **Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight** **p.91**

PS2



SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs COMBINED ASSAULT

But can they balance beach balls on their noses? – **page 92**

- **Everybody's Tennis** **p.94**
- **Medal of Honor Vanguard** **p.95**
- **SBK-07 Superbike World Championship** **p.95**

PSP



VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Pocket-sized ball-socking! Brilliant! – **page 96**

- **After Burner: Black Falcon** **p.97**
- **Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters** **p.98**

■ **GENRE:** RPG
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** BETHESDA SOFTWARES
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **RESOLUTION:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com.au

■ **BACK STORY:** The highly acclaimed *Elder Scrolls* series finally finds its way to *OPS* Towers. What more does Bethesda have in store for its vigilant and patient PS3 fan base? Catch a glimpse of what we regard as one of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on.

THE ELDER SCROLLS VI: OBLIVION

Living in Oblivion... and loving it!



Welcome friend. Come closer and let this humble soul spin you a tale. A magnificent, wondrous tale of bravery against terrifying evil, of redemption in a land filled with despair, of a messenger surely sent by the Nine Gods as a beacon of hope and courage to those who cannot see the light. Listen as we recount the legend of a warrior without peer, or fear, who wrenched open the very Gates of Hell, laughed in the face of its Dark Prince and shoved an almighty sword down his throat. Welcome, dear friend, to *Elder Scrolls IV*. Welcome to *Oblivion*.

YOU'RE SOOO GOOD LOOKING...

From the moment you boot this bad boy up, you know you're in for something special. As you are customising your character, getting the look just right, the wealth of options is impressive. You can adjust anything, be it hair length, skin colour, eye pigmentation... whatever. Then the real fun begins. You get to pick your race. Each one has unique characteristics, and it's a really tough decision. Some lizard inspired creatures can breathe underwater and are impervious to poison and disease, cat-like beasts can see in the dark, others can summon ancestral guardians to protect them, like the Dark Elves (our favourite due to their balanced mastery of sword, the bow and destruction magic). Pimp out your hero and away you go.

ERR... WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN?

So here you are, stuck in a prison cell thinking, I knew those promiscuous maidens weren't over eighteen. You'll swivel the old thumb sticks around to get a better look and the

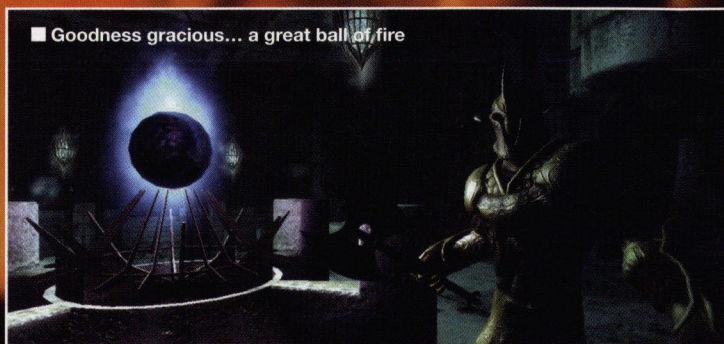
PlayStation
GOLD AWARD
10/10



■ Lord Hugalot always carried an umbrella – just in case...




■ Goodness gracious... a great ball of fire



■ Nicole Ritchie: so totally hot right now





first thing running through your head is "Jesus H. Christ this game has some slick visuals!" Light flickers off the walls, and you can almost touch the glistening moisture – it really is quite remarkable. Those of you who don't dig first-person can click R3 and shazam! It switches to third-person so you can play it both ways. It's handled in such an understated way that you'll almost not even notice. That's the brilliance of *Oblivion*, and it's a theme carried throughout almost every aspect of it.

ENGAGE!

Eventually something drags your peepers away from your lush environment, namely some heavily armed guards protecting a regal figure. He opens a hidden passageway and beckons you to join him. You may miss a little of what he's saying as Patrick Stewart's subtle tones convey an overwhelming sense of Shakespearian drama, but needless to say you really feel like you're off to save the world. After taking a few twists and turns, you go off and explore the caverns on your own. Cue tutorial stage. Grab yourself a nice rusty sword and start looking for something to fricassee. You spot an inattentive goblin who looks like the perfect scabbard. You sneak up on him for some target practise and gleefully enjoy your first (of many) stealth kills. Clicking L3 pops you into "sneak" mode. An eye surrounds your crosshair – if it remains dim you're in the clear, but if the


edge lights up you're toast. Sneak kills deal critical hits and up to six times the damage, so it's a useful skill to develop.

MY HORRORSCOPE SAID NOTHING ABOUT THIS

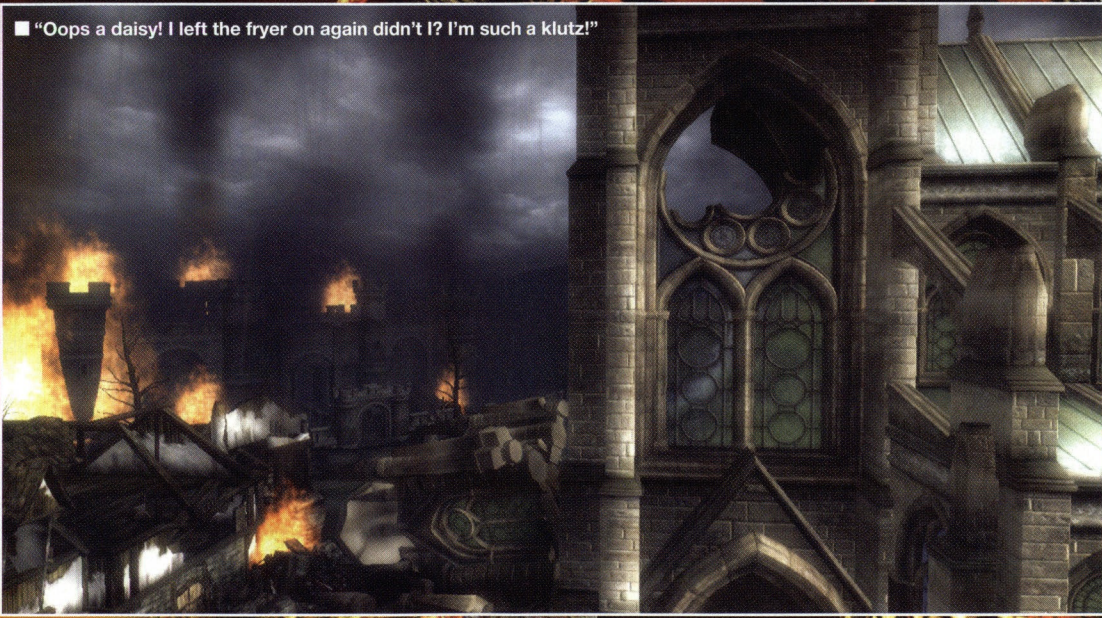
By the time you rejoin your king, you've slayed a dozen or so goblins, discovered rudimentary lock picking, your bow and arrow, got a handle on the menu, learnt how to block and parry, tried out a few spells and even given alchemy a whirl... whew! As you regroup, one of the elite guards helps determine which constellation you were born under. The way you've played up till this point governs which birth sign you're assigned, however, you can choose if you prefer. Most of these give you a once-a-day skill, like full heal or something along those lines, but before you get comfortable comparing horoscopes, the King gets murdered by some crazy cultists known as the Mythic Dawn (who pledge allegiance to Mehrunes Dagon... see below).

THE STAGE IS SET

In his final moments the King charges you with a quest. He gives you the Amulet of Kings to deliver to his last surviving heir. Only a member of the Septim (royal) family can use



■ "Raaarrrrrr..." "Sorry I didn't quite catch that?" "I said RAAAAARRRR"



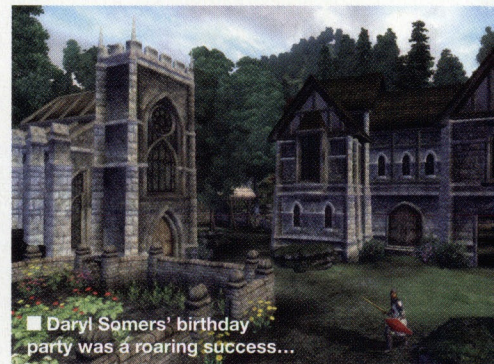
■ "Oops a daisy! I left the fryer on again didn't I? I'm such a klutz!"

ARE YOU THE GATEKEEPER?

The various forms of nasty that cross over and attack Cyrodiil do so via "Oblivion" Gates. These are impossible to miss due to their sheer size and the fact that the entire sky bleeds red as you approach one. They look a hell of a lot like the all-seeing eye in *The Lord of the Rings* films. Sixteen or so crop up, and while it is not necessary to close each and every one of them to complete the main quest, it's a great way to level up.



■ "You got here just in time! *Neighbours* is starting!"



■ Daryl Somers' birthday party was a roaring success...

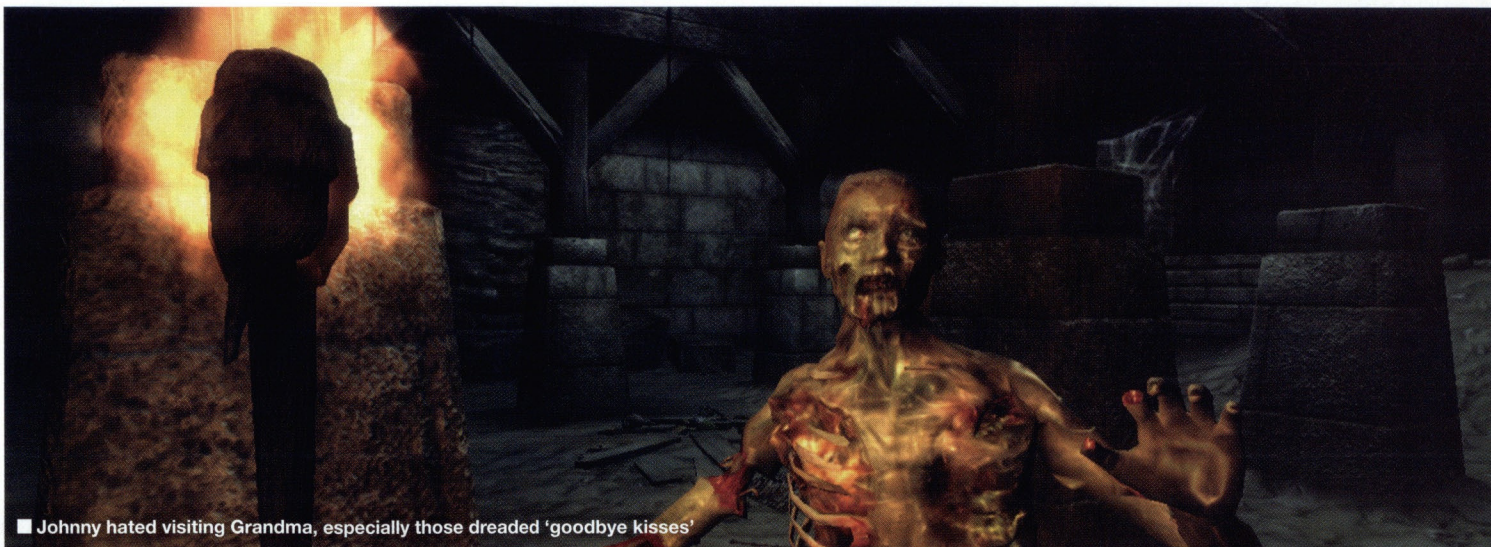
said amulet to light the Dragonfires at The Temple of the One, thus keeping the mystical barriers in place, and shutting down the Oblivion Gates, which the dastardly Mehrunes Dagon (Dark Prince of Oblivion) is using to launch his assault on Cyrodiill. Got all that?

You navigate through the sewers and reach a gate to the outside world. As with your birth sign, your class will also be suggested, though this too may be altered. Choose this carefully as it will govern which skills are your bread and butter, and utilising these is the only way to level up. You can also change any other aspect of your character, but after you go through the gate, that's all she wrote.

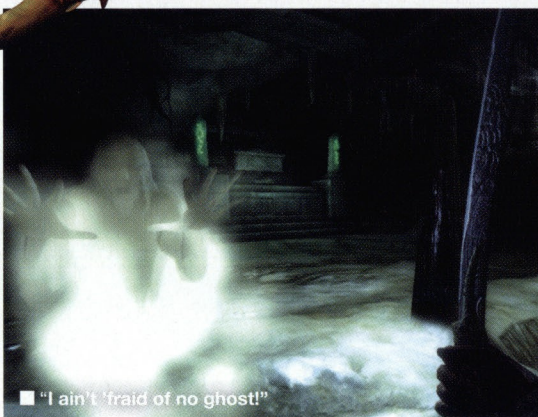
SIZE DOES MATTER

To say that Cyrodiill is a ridiculously large playpen, would be like saying Donald Trump has got a coupla bucks, or Jessica

Alba is sorta hot... you with us? There are around two hundred or so caverns, mines, shrines and gates to explore. Here are just a few highlights. You can instantly teleport between areas you've already visited through the menu. Many NPCs' disposition towards you changes if you have a weapon drawn. Some will have information for you, but need to be "convinced" with bribes or persuaded by your mastery of speechcraft. You can get into alchemy, creating potions or poisons to enhance the killing-ness of your weapons. You can break into houses or pickpocket most people, and sell stolen items on the black market. HOWEVER, the town guards are tough mofos and do not look lightly upon these transgressions – you'll probably end up in gaol (resisting arrest is not recommended as it's usually a one way ticket to your last saved game). Alternately, the Thieves' Guild could approach you, and then it's off to Cyrodiill's seedy underbelly. You could murder someone for the fun of it and be



■ Johnny hated visiting Grandma, especially those dreaded 'goodbye kisses'



■ "I ain't 'fraid of no ghost!"



INFO BYTE

Due to the later release on PS3, the already fully loaded *Oblivion* gives you more – namely the inclusion of the Knights of the Nine expansion pack, translating into 10-20 hours of new missions, beasts and weapons to whet your appetite.

The Elder Scrolls VI: Oblivion offers you a chance to live out your heroic fantasies or murderous tendencies or... both. The choice is yours.

recruited into the Dark Brotherhood as an assassin for hire. Perhaps you're partial to phone throwing Kiwis and fancy trying your hand at the Gladiator's Arena. Maybe you're a little goody two shoes? Join the Fighters' Guild and defend the weak, or take a walk in Gandalf's shoes and locate artefacts for the Mage's Guild. You could even get bitten by a vampire, and live out your days feasting on blood and avoiding sunlight. As you can see the possibilities are almost endless... and most of what we've just described isn't even part of the main storyline!

Your first foray into the Plane of Oblivion is the besieged town of Kvatch. You'll need to close the gate, and save the town. Stepping through the portal is literally a welcome to hell. Huge, horn-ridden towers, blood red skies and molten pools of magma greet you. All that's missing is Celine Dion playing in the background! There are tonnes of little scamps and imps running around hurling fireballs at you (any cold spell works really well against these), as well as some Battlemages, so stay on your toes. (Hint: each gate is kept open by a sacred stone. These can be taken to seal the gate and upgrade magical armour and weapons) Once you've rescued Kvatch, there's only fifteen more to go! Plus... the Great Gate at the conclusion.

DON'T I KNOW YOU?

The longer you spend on your quest, the more celebrity and notoriety you'll receive. NPCs might greet you as "The Hero of Kvatch" or "Champion of the Arena", while thieves may recognise you as a master pickpocket. Other shady individuals may praise your skill as an assassin. The best part is you can wear several hats at once, with each faction only recognising you as a member of their group. We were cracking up at the fact that we were part of the Blades, a secret brotherhood that defends the empire from evil, and a member of the Dark Brotherhood, a surreptitious guild that deals death if the price is right.

I THINK YOU UNDERESTIMATE THE SNEAKINESS SIR

Check out this little scenario. In the closing stages, before the final epic (and it really is EPIC) battle, we'd realised we were nigh invisible to the naked eye. We'd earned a Master's rank in sneak, and had a ring of chameleon and could literally run down the street in broad daylight with NPCs none

the wiser. It gets better. We jumped to a deserted mine and opened up a serious can of whup ass on some zombies, vampires and goblins. We were, straight up, laughing out loud as we snuck up behind one after another, dealing them a world of hurt whilst they were wondering what the hell was going on, and where the next one was coming from. What? All's fair in love and war. Nuthin' better than getting the drop on someone and repeatedly stabbing them in the back... is there? Maybe punctuate it with a "Bitch! You don't know who the hell I am!" but that's just how we roll.

SO IT'S PRETTY GOOD, AYE?

What we've given you here is but a mere sample of what's available. *The Elder Scrolls VI: Oblivion* offers you a chance to live out your heroic fantasies or murderous tendencies or... both. The choice is yours. That's the beauty of *Oblivion* – if you can imagine it, you can achieve it, it is the definition of the open-ended game. In a word: astounding. **Dave Kozicki**

PROS:

- Really, ridiculously good-looking
- Incredibly deep, intuitive

CONS:

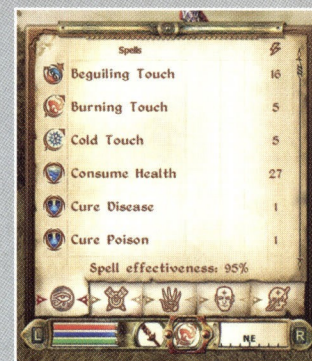
- NPC lip-syncing is a bit off
- Third-person looks a tad stilted

VERDICT: Simply put... awesome.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
10

EASY ACCESS BABY!

Though a tad daunting at first, hitting **Ⓢ** brings up your menu. The bumpers toggle between quests, inventory and spells. A great feature is the "hotkey" function. Pick an item, be it weapons, spells, armour or even the mortar and pestle and use triangle to assign it a position on the D-pad. You'll barely use the menu once the hotkeys are customised. Just a quick little tap on the D-pad keeps the action fast and furious. Just tap it in... give it a little tap, tap, taperoo!



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** TACTICAL FPS

■ **RELEASE:** NOW

■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL

■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16

■ **PRICE:** \$119.95

■ **HD:** 720p

■ **WEB:** www.rainbowsixgame.uk.ubi.com

■ **BACK STORY:** You've got your PS3. You've got *Resistance*. You love it like a child. You've finished the game on hard and – some of you – superhuman. You feel trapped. You need other games. Happily, we have one for you. It's slick and hardcore. Viva Las Vegas.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS

Those Rainbow boys are back. To save the city and maybe take in a show!

PlayStation
SILVER
AWARD
9/10

Tom Clancy is perfect fodder for videogames. His "novels" (and we use that term in the broadest sense) are the kind of literary bricks you pick up on holiday at the airport and leave it somewhere before you come back. The plots are usually about grizzled thick-jawed Americans taking down evil commie/Nazi/Muslim scum. His style is humourless and quietly jingoistic. Hell, you could probably call his books "America – YAY!" and not be far off the mark. Yet he's managed to find a serious niche on the PS2 and now PS3. *Splinter Cell*, *Ghost Recon* and *Rainbow Six*. Will his first next gen *Rainbow* adventure be dry as a sawdust sandwich or will *Vegas* make this tactical shooter pay off?

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY SONGS ABOUT RAINBOWS?

In all honesty the *Rainbow Six* games for the PS2 were... not great. They had the makings of genius – FPSs that tried to really put you in situations where you feel like you were taking part in black ops, secret missions and

wet works (all fancy names for "killing a lot of people who speak different 'un us'. Yee-Hah!"). However the actual mechanic of the game never really came together on the PS2. Sure you could order your two-man squad about, to protect you or attack the enemy but ultimately the AI on pretty much every PS2 *Rainbow Six* title was Artificial Idiocy.

Enemies (or tangers as they're called. It's code. Oh yeah, we're down with the military lingo) would shoot at you from a distance but quite often you'd walk up to them and find them walking in a circle, looking at their feet and paying no attention to you. Certainly the "silent treatment" is very effective when strategically used by your girlfriend – however when terrorists do it? Kinda kills the idea your boys are up against a fiendishly intelligent foe. What are they trying to do, hurt your feelings to death? There was just no sense of consistency, or tightness to the game. Well, *Vegas* is tighter than a duck's arse (cheers for that one, Luke).

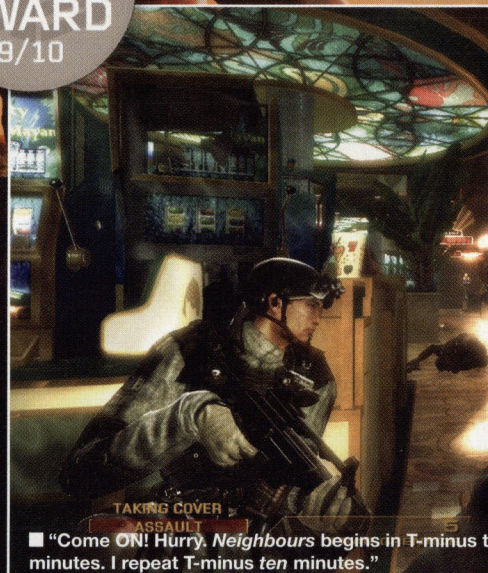
VIVA LAS VEGAS – BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

All goofin' aside the next gen overhaul

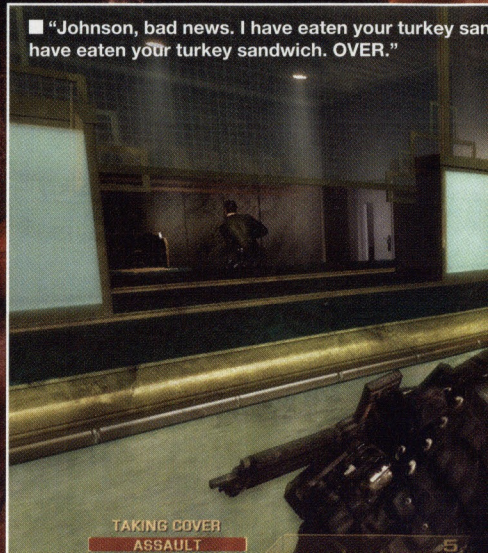
given to *Rainbow* in *Vegas* is quite extraordinary. There was little sense of urgency in the PS2 outings. Once you got the whole 'frag and clear' commands down, you could cruise lazily from room to room and let your team do all the work. The weapons all seemed kind of samey and the graphics were colourless (possibly due to the fact all the locations were warehouses or docks or similar).

Vegas is a completely different animal, as you'll find out in the opening stage in Mexico. At first you have no team to take the bullets for you. And it will become quickly apparent that two, maybe three bullets and you're dead.

Vegas is an FPS but it has moments of third-person genius. When you take cover behind something it pulls back and lets you see where you are in relation to your enemy. You can blind-fire – where you stiek your gun out and just fill your tango's general location with bullets, which is cool but rarely results in a kill. Or you can jump out and aim a stream of hot lead at your enemy. The problem being you're now a target and these boys have taken shooting lessons or something because they're good. Lose concentration for a few



■ "Come ON! Hurry. Neighbours begins in T-minus ten minutes. I repeat T-minus ten minutes."



■ "Johnson, bad news. I have eaten your turkey sandwich. I have eaten your turkey sandwich. OVER."



■ Getting into the club: literally a military operation...

INFO BYTE

Seriously, why Tom Clancy? If you want to use the works of a best-selling author why not Stephen King? Imagine *Salem's Lot - The Game*. Or *The Shining*. Hell, even *Cell* and some of his later, lesser works! Oh how about *IT*? That'd be an awesome game. "We all float down here... we all float." Sorry. Moving on.



ich. REPEAT. I



■ "Base, we have Streisland in our sights. Awaiting instructions."
"Take the shot! Say again - TAKE THE SHOT!"



"Vegas' brightly lit neon streets filled with firefights and spattered with the blood of man; righteous and evil alike."

seconds and you're toast. The checkpoints are well-placed but not outrageously generous and things can go pear-shaped very quickly.

BLOW UP THE POKIES!

After the rather lengthy Mexican adventure you'll be quickly sent to Vegas. During the helicopter flight you can pimp your weapons - which is a nice touch - with laser sights, bigger magazines and the like. After a bit of exposition you'll drop into Vegas. Literally you'll shimmy down ropes to the ground. You can also rappel up and down buildings and use "fast ropes" later on to great effect.

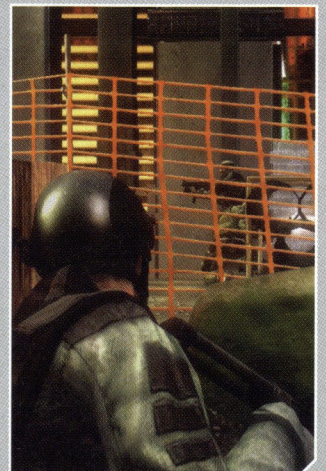
Seeing the normally neon-soaked Las Vegas for the first time in-game is pretty amazing. The streets are strewn with abandoned and burning cars. Smoke

grenades obscure clear views of your objectives and tangers are running about everywhere. You can go in loud, leaving your boys weapons free - but unless you're a dead-eye shot chances are you'll be three dead soldiers. A better tactic is to equip your weapons with silencers and take them out individually without alerting others. The cool thing is, this time if they see you they'll radio their cohorts and bring hell down upon you.

When you finally make it into the various casinos, *Vegas* is without doubt an absolute blast. Taking out tangers as they try to flank you, blowing up rows of pokies so they spurt out coins like metallic blood and taking care of various sub missions - including finding out just why in the blue hell these guys want to be in Vegas anyway.

THESE BOYS ARE SMART!

We can't rattle on enough about how much the AI has improved in this game. From your team-mates who will suggest tactics and even inform you when the enemy starts to flank you, to the enemies who take cover, use smoke grenades as cover and rush you if you stay in one place for too long. Nice stuff, gang.

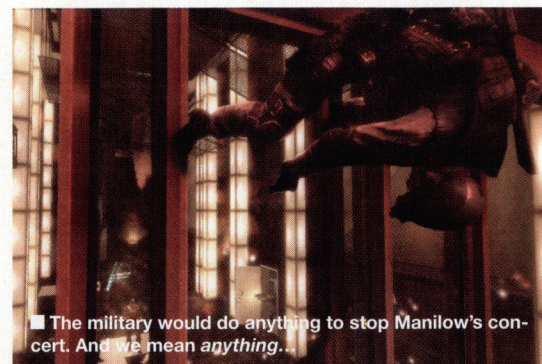




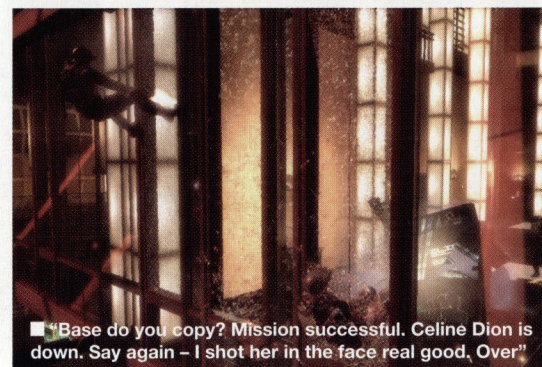
TAKING COVER

ASSAULT

■ "After all that we've been through, I will make it up to you - I promise you..."
"Johnson, NO power ballads! Mind on the job!"



■ The military would do anything to stop Manilow's concert. And we mean anything...



■ "Base do you copy? Mission successful. Celine Dion is down. Say again - I shot her in the face real good, Over"

MOVIE MOMENTS

Perhaps in reaction to people yawning through some of the levels, Vegas amps up the action with a series of set-pieces worthy of an action movie. Some take place in the casinos, others when you fast rope into a nest of enemies and take them out. There are a few moments that will leave you panting with satisfaction after you beat them.



WEATY PALMED ACTION A-GO-GO

These tangoes are well organised, well armed and are killing innocent people! Damn, we're starting to sound like the blurb of a Clancy book - but you do get caught up in it. After all, what's one of the best action films of all time? *Die Hard* (anyone who said *Bad Boys 2*, smack yourself in the face!). In that movie (as anyone with a functional DVD player and brain should know) was all about one man stopping terrorists taking over one office building. And it was great.

Now imagine that scale... and expand it over a whole city. Yep, all of Vegas is under terrorist control. That's a pretty damn cool premise for a game. Vegas' brightly lit neon streets filled with firefights and spattered with the blood of man; righteous and evil alike.

LET US DO THE "TANGO" TANGO

Gameplay-wise things couldn't be more simple. Order your men with your reticule, or use the D-pad for more complicated orders. You also have to use the old 'noggin'. If you're about to invade a room with hostages or combustible material - it's probably not too bright flinging grenades in there. No, for those kinds of situations

a flash bang would be the go. If, on the other hand, it's a large group of smug terros - blow 'em up and mop up anything that can still walk. You also have the ability to save downed colleagues by injecting them with health - or getting a still walking team-mate to do so.

SO IS THERE A POT OF GOLD AT THE END OF THIS RAINBOW?

This is likely the second best FPS for the PS3 so far. It looks amazing. The graphics are very tight, with rarely a moment of slowdown (which when you see some of the detail of the levels is very impressive). Those of you who will only play games with monsters, zombies or mutants may find Vegas a trifle dry... but really there are so many cinematic moments it's hard not to be wowed. Sound also is effective - with silenced weapons making that farty "Frrrr! Frrrr!" noise, and the third-person

moments when you take cover are genius.

On the downside the end is a little anti-climatical. Sure we weren't expecting a robot to suddenly rise from under the ground shooting radioactive spiders (although how cool would that be? No? Okay...) but this "To be continued" caper is a bit rough. After you've plugged 20+ hard, tense hours into this puppy is pretty unsatisfying. Then again when you factor in the co-op, multiplayer and "Terrorist Hunt" (a game you unlock when you finish it for the first time - basically you killing terros on various levels) it's a pretty well-rounded product. Certainly the best *Rainbow Six* game to date, and certainly the most accessible tactical shooter around. Though it's no *Resistance* beater - it's a challenging, engaging and highly enjoyable FPS. Where will the Rainbow team go next? Rooty Hill RSL? Now that's a game we'd get into! **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:

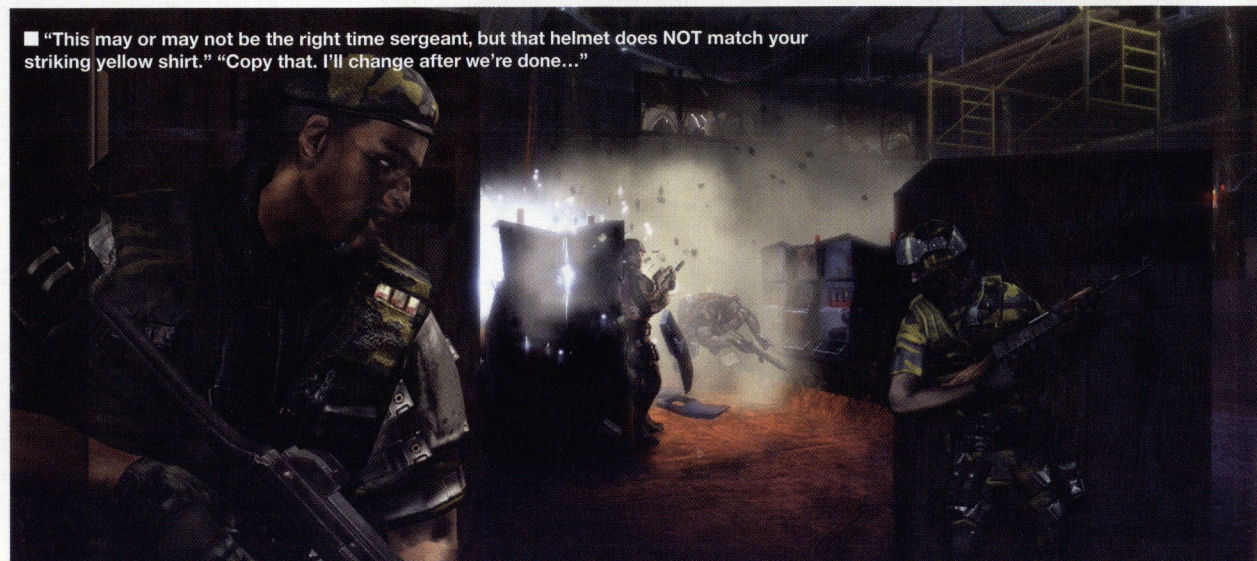
- Looks and plays damn well
- Decent campaign, multiplayer

CONS:

- Can get a tad repetitive
- The ending blows...

VERDICT: This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. Slick, gorgeous and utterly engaging.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09



■ "This may or may not be the right time sergeant, but that helmet does NOT match your striking yellow shirt." "Copy that. I'll change after we're done..."

T3

The world's No.1 gadget mag



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**T3 IS THE REAL
PLAY STATION**

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** FROM SOFTWARE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED ANT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-8
■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.sega.com/armoredcore4/

■ **BACK STORY:** From Software has been specialising in action games and RPGs since its 1994 debut PlayStation release *King's Field*. As well as the *Armored Core* series, Tokyo-based From Software has also worked on *Enchanted Arms* and *Otogi*.

ARMORED CORE 4

What to mech of this?

We've been waiting for the day when *Armored Core* would go online since... well, since we discovered the series on the PS1. It was so obviously well-adjusted for online combat: everyone would have their own, personally customised mech as well as their own signature styles of play (which developers have always encouraged players to develop). *Armored Core 4* is the realisation of our online AC dreams.

Although the single-player mode here provides plenty of action – and with variety, too (some levels are quick blitzes that only take a mere 30 seconds to complete, while more complex missions can take 15 minutes or longer) – *AC4* is most definitely multiplayer-focussed.

There are stacks of options here, including eight-player battle royales and

progressive knockout tournaments. Most of the players online right now are hard 'core' fans, so this is the perfect chance to develop your skills alongside some of the world's best players. There's surprisingly little lag in online play considering that no detail has been sacrificed. Altogether it's a thoroughly impressive option that goes a long way towards making up for *AC4*'s hit-and-miss single-player mode.

Yep, unfortunately, while we can wholeheartedly recommend *AC4* for its multiplayer bounty, the solo stuff here is a bit patchy. Early levels are too simple to offer any real challenge, and most of these missions can be skimmed through without any worries. Few will have any difficulty getting past enemies in the game's early stages: just make use of *AC4*'s new and improved boost function to dodge

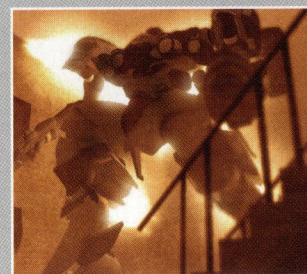
incoming attacks (in fact, the boost feature has possibly been improved *too* much, and it ends up as something of a crutch for players to lean on).

Later on, *AC4* gets tougher – albeit, with sporadic jumps and regressions in its level of difficulty – but sometimes the technology can't keep up with what the developer wants to do. When levels are full of enemies, you'll often find frame-rate drops that destroy the flow of play. It's a shame. Thanks to the limited nature of online competition, where there are no AI-controlled mechs, *AC4*'s multiplayer fares far better than its single-player campaign.

Get it for the multiplayer, then, and dabble in single-player if you're a patient gamer. There's still room for improvement, but this PS3 debut for the series is a very respectable effort. **Jonti Davies**

CUSTOMISE IT!

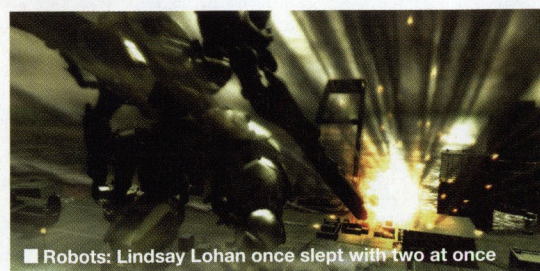
Armored Core 4, like all its predecessors, has more customisation options than we can get our heads around. And taking things to another level, the customisation of one area of your mech will affect the balance and performance of other features. There's a lot to think about before making upgrades. Neatly, you can also trade parts with other players over the PlayStation Network.



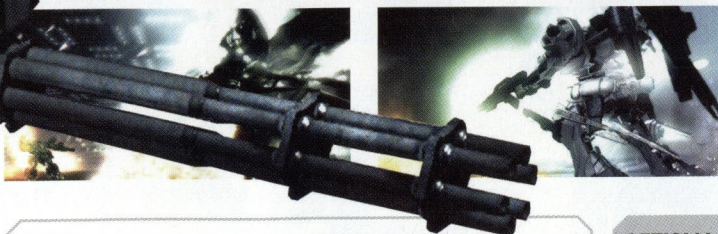
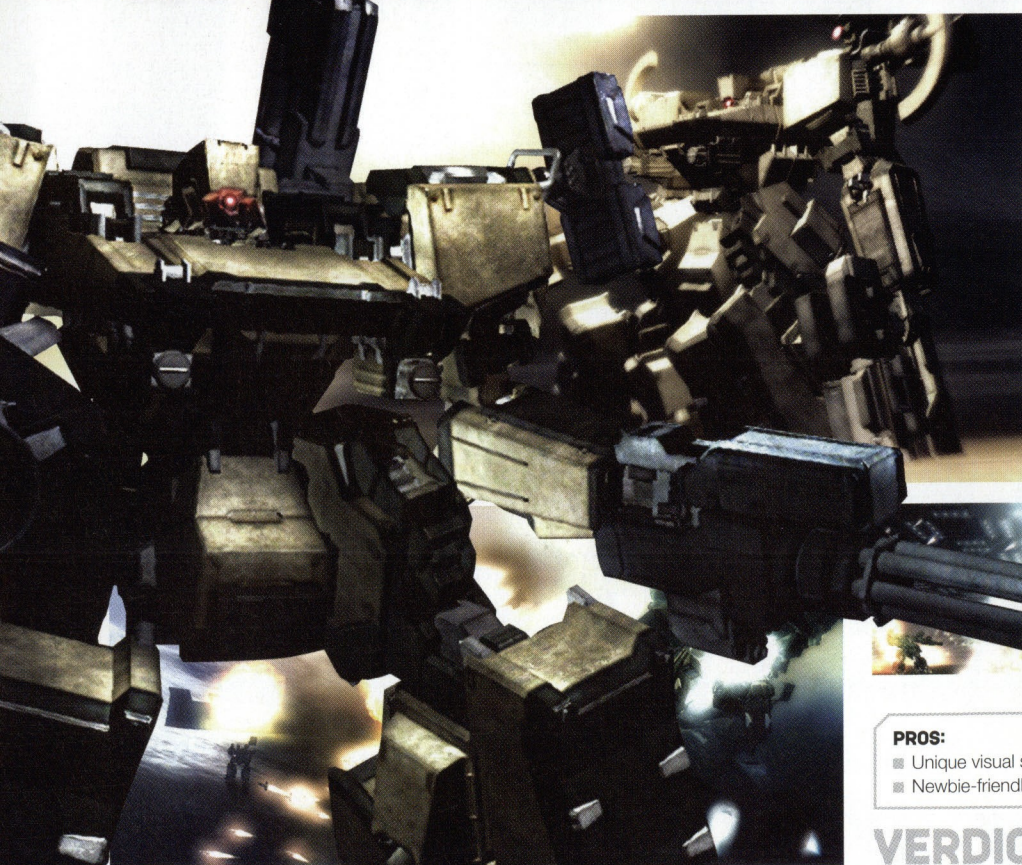
■ Robots: They're better at doing stuff than you are



■ Robots: They're going to take over the world one day



■ Robots: Lindsay Lohan once slept with two at once



PROS:

- Unique visual style
- Newbie-friendly, great online

CONS:

- Feels slightly rushed
- Frame-rate stutters at times

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

07

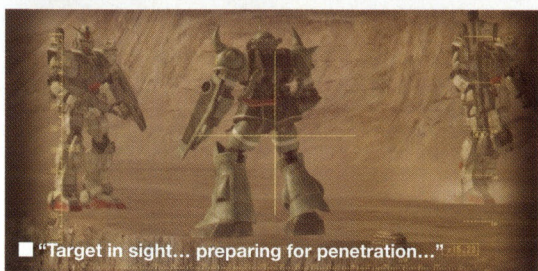
VERDICT: A very respectable mech game and a far better alternative than MSG: *Target In Sight*.

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
 ■ **RELEASE:** NOW
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO BANDAI
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
 ■ **PRICE:** \$99.95
 ■ **HD:** 720p
 ■ **WEB:** www.namcobandai.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Namco and Bandai decided to partner up a few years back, with Namco providing the game's experience while Bandai took care of the character and franchise merchandising. Apart from MSG, Namco Bandai was also behind *Ridge Racer 7* for PS3.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



■ "Target in sight... preparing for penetration..."



■ "CP54... there's something I've been meaning to tell you..." "Shhh XW20... after all these years, we don't need words..." (robot kissing sounds)



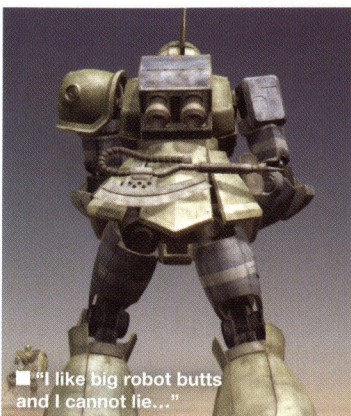
■ "Ass power - ENGAGE!"

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

MSG is bad for you...

What a pipe blocker! Unfortunately for the two or so mech fans out there, *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight* is one of those brown bag games that barrels a tsunami of banality over every marked category. While the third-person "mech" genre, like human taxidermy, has always been somewhat of a niche pastime, that doesn't excuse the lack of glue in this eleventh-hour tripe.

The premise is forgettable. Two human factions go at it by jumping into big metal robots and charging at each other on the battlefield. One positive, we guess, is



■ "I like big robot butts and I cannot lie..."

that you can choose to play for either the rebellious Zeons or the Earth Federation, with each side possessing a different assortment of mechanised terrors. The biggest plus in the game, though – by far – is that for once Australia features as a military stronghold. Guarded by ocean and laden with battle-ready desert, it's the home base for the Earth Federation. Yay for us.

It's all downhill though from there. Initial footage of this game was revealed two years ago at E3, exciting robot-ophiles and hardware gurus alike with its brilliance. Now, with the final game before us, it's apparent the E3 demo was merely a company dangling a digital wet dream. Hell, comparatively *Eva Longoria* looks more like *Kermit the Frog*. *MSG* instead grounds its missions on barren scapes as it throws out murky fog, dusty texture work, and featureless surroundings bar the occasional tree or building. While the mech models pimp plenty of polys, many look like cheap toys rather than black death on legs. Combine that with a frame-rate that stutters more than the cha-cha and a bundle of hack-patched animation, and it's clear that *MSG* could crack a mirror.

It's almost as unplayable, too. The mobile suits are like shopping trolleys from hell, over rotating due to controls that see

the right stick relegated to controlling your view without determining your direction, while the ability to dash around on the battlefield while firing is over complicated and haphazard. Unlike most shooters there's no means to aim manually unless you're in the stationary sniper mode, meaning you're completely reliant on being able to lock on to the enemies punching out chest-busting missiles at you from the draw distance haze.

The front-end loadout is also a Barry Croker, heavy on fiddly customisation options and the need to manage a battle calendar – all too laborious for most to bother with.

Mech games are supposed to be a snowball of tech fantasy, lurching firepower, and strategic shooting; comparatively *MSG* is a rubber *Godzilla* of a title that looks uncooked, plays stiffly and provides no satisfaction. If you're a huge mech fan then get *Armored Core 4*. It's got to be better than this. **James Ellis**

PROS:

- Um... give us a tick...
- ...nah, we've got nothing

CONS:

- It cannot be bought with Monopoly money

VERDICT: Optimus Prime and C3-PO should rope *MSG* down and beat it vigorously with a large stick.

I SEE YOUR SCHWARTZ IS AS BIG AS MINE

When you're a hulking robot it's important to carry around a massive electric phallus to show everyone else that you're a real robot man. In *MSG* the gundams are no different, with many bots equipped with a saber sword for some inside metal works. A helluva lot stronger than most guns, these swords can shred opposing bots, cutting off arms, legs, and even heads. Some long fought battles will also deplete your ammo, leaving you no other choice but to attack with the power of your sabre. Not an easy task.



INFO BYTE

Oddly enough, the game has sold well in Japan due to the licence's cult following! Why, Japan, why?

OFFICIAL SCORE:

03

■ **GENRE:** TACTICAL SHOOTER
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-32
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95, \$99.95 (headset)
■ **HD:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.us.playstation.com

■ **BACK STORY:** SOCOM is known for its realism. There are no double fisted, roaring heroics – mostly you'll be shooting your enemies a good few footy fields away. Read on, private or you'll be on latrine duty until 08:00 or something. We suck at military speak.



■ Little known fact: if you play dead US Navy SEALs will just sniff you a bit and leave you be. No, wait. That's bears

SOCOM U.S. NAVY SEALS: COMBINED ASSAULT

Get ready to sneak around on your belly all over again!

Adjlikistan – the fictional location that *SOCOM US Navy SEALs: Combined Assault* takes place in – is a war-torn hell hole. Oh sure there are beautiful, snow-capped mountain ranges, verdant valleys and quaint little villages. Unfortunately the aesthetics are somewhat marred by the roaming herds of terrorists. You can imagine the tour guides trying to make the best of things:

"Welcome to beautiful Adjlikistan. 'What was that noise'? Oh it was a car back firing! Repeatedly. Look at our mountains, they... what's that? 'The burnt out tank

hulk'? It's... um, art! Yes modern art! Now watch out for that pile of corpses and the bloke with the AK-47... oh God... look a goat! Everyone look at our beautiful goat!"

Bloody terros, eh? Can't have a picnic without them eating all your food and... no, wait. That's ants. Sorry, it's easy to confuse the two because in *Combined Assault* you'll mainly be shooting your targets from great distances.

BUT FIRST, A RE-BRIEFING

For anyone familiar with the SOCOM games, or those who are not, here's a brief

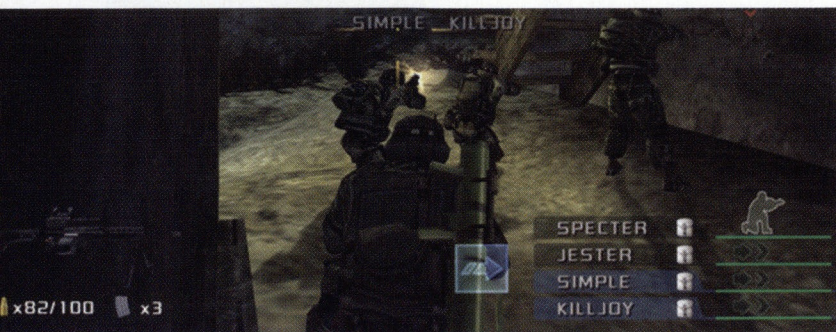
refresher course: You command a team of three Navy SEALs, all of whom are armed to the teeth and ready to save America from all manner of nasty buggers.

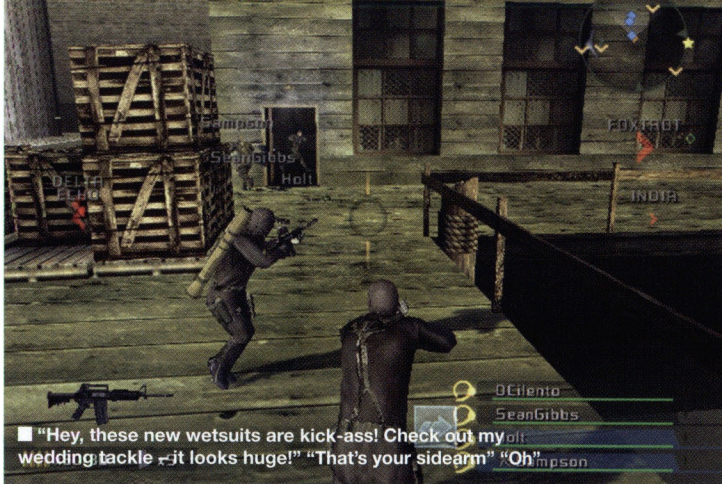
This is not a run and gun kind of caper. As with previous entries in the series, it's very much a matter of sneak, scope, spy and shoot. You'll also usually be shooting from a long way away. This is probably very accurate – we're not sure, no one at OPS Towers has been a Navy SEAL, or even a Navy porpoise – but it lacks some of the wild, kinetic fun of, say, *Black for PS2* or *Resistance* for PS3.

This won't turn off the tactical shooter fans, and let's face it – you know by now if *SOCOM* is your bag or not.

MISSION: MAYBE POSSIBLE

The 18 or so missions in *Combined Assault* are varied and interesting for the most part. The levels are designed especially well so you can tackle the objectives in your own order. Feel like disabling the communications before you rescue the hostage? Up you go, son. Want to plant C4 on the AA-guns before you snipe the dudes in the lookout





"...no one at OPS Towers has been a Navy SEAL, or even a Navy porpoise."

tower – who are we to stop you? This sense of open-endedness and the large environments give a real sense of each mission being epic and quite tricky. Unfortunately the game is really stingy with checkpoints – most missions just have one at about the halfway mark. That's fine if you're familiar with the level, but as you'll often inadvertently stumble into ambushes and firefights with the trial and error nature of this type of game, you'll find yourself often attempting the same objectives again. And again.

THE SPICE OF LIFE!

Variety is nice in life and games. And one nice feature in *Combined Assault* is the ability to choose which mission you'll do next (they usually give you a choice of two or three). This is especially good for when you get stuck on a hard bit, just abort the offending mission and try another one. Chances are, once you've calmed down and stopped screaming swears at your PS2, you'll have figured out a way to finish the mission.

THE "EH?" TEAM

One niggle with the *SOCOM* series is your team. Look, they're probably nice fellows, but they're a couple of films short of a trilogy if you know what we mean. You can issue commands and your team

will treat them more as... suggestions. Certainly simple ones like "MOVE TO" and "FOLLOW" are obeyed, but when you start splitting the team up to flank a nest of unfriendlies, or get your boys to frag, breach and clear a room they'll often piss fart about near the door and throw a grenade at their feet. Not quite what you were hoping for.

Other times they'll get in the way of your fire causing the mission to end because of their stupidity. Like the old saying: "If this M4 is rockin', don't bloody well stand in front of it you dull-witted mules!" Still the team are quite good at sneaking into rooms and taking the bulk of the fire. They're almost like walking Kevlar vests. Probably not their intended function.

Your enemies are similarly afflicted by a touch of the stupids. From afar they'll snipe you dead – but get up close and half the time they don't even notice you until you've shot them. Or even worse, dance around, bumping into walls and looking at their shoes like a Goth kid listening to The Cure.

PROS:

- A long single-player campaign
- Awesome four-player action

CONS:

- You get eyestrain from sniping
- Not enough checkpoints

VERDICT: *Combined Assault* is a solid tactical shooter – but it lacks any progress from the last one.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
07

KAHI : ENEMY DOWN
KAHI : fragged RARRO
KAHI : ENEMY DOWN

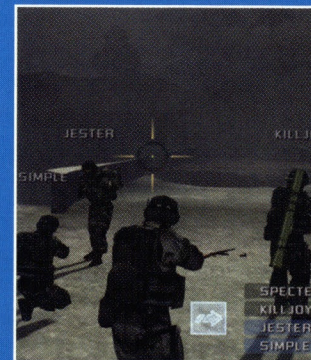
INFO BYTE

If certain missions are completed on the PSP *SOCOM*, then they will be easier to finish on *Combined Assault*. We just can't wait for the PS3 version!



"LET'S HAVE AN AWESOME FOURSOME!"

Rather than rely on ropey game AI, why not find three chums to link up with and tackle the missions together. Using the headset you can even swear at your mates and give them stupid nicknames like "spanky", "man titties" and "stink box". Look, it sounds silly but it can be a lot of fun. "Hey man titties, take stink box and flank those tangos!" See? It's GOLD, baby!



■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** CLAP HANZ
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **HD:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Clap Hanz has been with us since 1998, when its unique take on golf proved to be a huge hit. Following on from the *Everybody's Golf* franchise, it now adds volley, serve and lob to the genre of 'Big Head Sports Games'.

EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

Giant heads! Short skirts! Bad European accents!

As we've noted before, *Virtua Tennis* is the 'piece de resistance' of tennis games. It's the cherry on top. It's the Chimpanzee Ride at Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch (er... so we've heard). The point is, such a simulation game isn't for everybody. So developer Clap Hanz has seized on an opportunity for anti-niche marketing, and has attempted to create a game for everybody. Yes, everybody. Even you.

In fact, it hasn't done such bad job either. A game like this has a simple objective: to be fun and accessible. On those two counts alone, *Everybody's Tennis* is a winner. Taking the simplicity of the *Everybody's Golf* series and throwing a racquet in, the team has created an enjoyable foray into the sport, and before long you, your Grandpa and your little

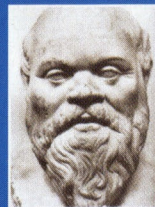
sister may all be yelling out "COME ON!" at the telly.

Sure, it looks very kiddy and cutesy, but behind the graphics there is a game that you'll want to get better at. Indeed, the graphics themselves perfectly suit the game; keeping it light, amusing and not at all weird when strange bubbles bob above your Bobble Head (although, wouldn't real tennis be more fun if musical notes appeared above players' heads?) Colourful graphic flashes let you know when you've hit a real winner, and, unlike your average Davis Cup Match, the crowd is always appreciative and well-behaved. There's little doubt that this could be the "little engine that could" of tennis games.

Keeping the gameplay itself straightforward is a small stroke of genius. The direction of the left analog stick moves

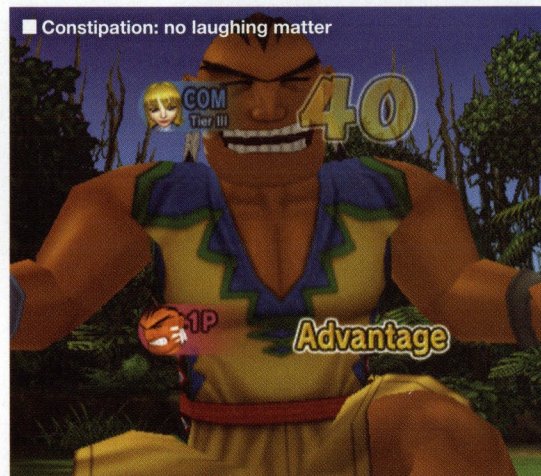
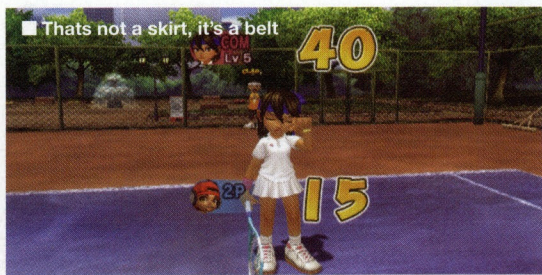
your character and selects ball direction. Match that up with a button and you're playing! The training mode will have you moving your bobble-headed Sharapova around the court in no time, and with emphasis placed squarely on the timing of your button pushes, this could possibly be the first game to accurately sum up its contents with its title: truly, everybody can play. And while some of the crowd might groan at the graphics (known in the industry as "Graphic Groan"), it won't be long before they're caught up in the gameplay like a ferret in some poor bugger's trousers. There are different costumes, courts and umpires to unlock, and you might find yourself actually chasing those items in spite of the derision of your other mates who are still playing *Scarface*. **Chris Dzelde**

SPHAIRISTIKE ANYONE?



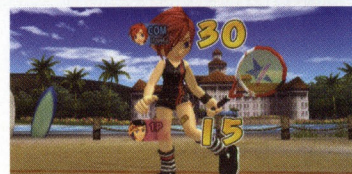
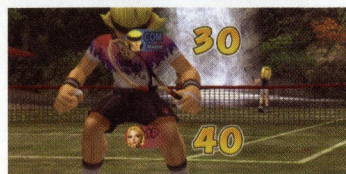
A variety of tennis was played by the ancient Greeks and in 1874, Major Walter Wingfield adapted the game,

thankfully forgoing the Greek name of "sphairistike" and forever ridding the world of the possibility of a console game called "Everybody's Sphairistike". The term "lawn tennis" was coined, and as it spread throughout the world in the early 1880s, Wingfield became annoyed because although he had patented the game, he never succeeded in enforcing his patent. He spent his days saying, "But - I invented tennis!" and received nothing but patronising looks from his peers and the occasional giggle.



INFO BYTE

Lleyton Hewitt refused to lend his character likeness to the *Everybody's Tennis* developers, as his head was already too big. Yes - we made that up.



PROS:

- Simple, no-nonsense fun
- Hilarious European accents

CONS:

- Lifespan could be short
- Overly simple mechanics

VERDICT: Possibly the ideal family game that will put everyone on level-pegging skill-wise.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

07

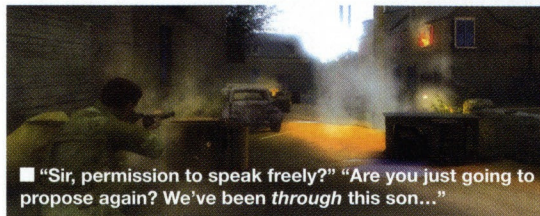


■ "Arrrrgh! My privates! They're exposed!" "Actually, we're fine Sarge!" "No, I forgot to do up my fly!"

■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA LOS ANGELES
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **HD:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW

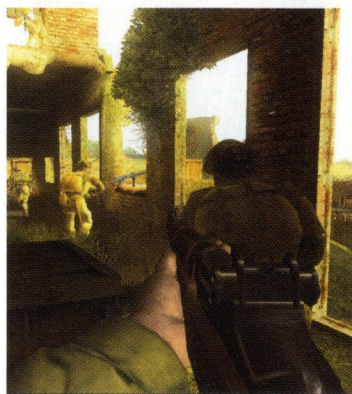


■ "Sir, permission to speak freely?" "Are you just going to propose again? We've been *through* this son..."



MEDAL OF HONOR VANGUARD

Dogs of War...



Ah, *Medal of Honor*, what happened to you? Like that hot chick that became totally fat, blotchy and gruesome three years out of high school, you continue to disappoint us. Don't you think it's time you cut out the cupcakes and hit the treadmill? Don't you want to be desired again? Don't you want to regain your former glory?

Of course you do. That's why EA has released *Vanguard*, an attempt to take *Medal of Honor* back to the top of the FPS genre, where it began.

Sadly, it hasn't really worked out that way. Sure *Medal of Honor* has lost a few pounds around the thighs, but overall

she's still the same old heifer. The game's controls are sticky and inconsistent, making aiming a nightmare unless you're standing completely still. Add to this some hideous bullet detection and you've got quite possibly the most frustrating mess since that time you stood in dog poo and walked on your mum's new Persian.

The WWII FPS market is crowded as it is, and EA adding to this clutter with a poorly made, rushed product like *Vanguard* does the *Medal of Honor* franchise no favours at all. This is a game that needs a makeover, and fast. *The Biggest Loser* and *Ricky Lake* combined couldn't make this growler passable. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:

- Nice voiceovers
- Passable graphics

CONS:

- Horrible controls
- Completely unoriginal

VERDICT: A minger that fails to halt the franchise's fall from grace.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

06



PlayStation
**BRONZE
AWARD**
8/10

■ Red hot tailpipe. It's what you get after eating an entire jalapeno chicken pizza

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** MILESTONE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED ANT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **HD:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.milestone.it/eng

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW



SBK-07: SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2007

"Faster, faster, faster, until the thrill of speed overcomes the fear of death..."

SBK-07: *Superbike World Championship 2007* from Milestone (the developer of the original *Superbike World Championship* in 1999 – at the time regarded as the best motorcycle simulation ever) is perhaps the most authentic recreation of two-wheeled racing on PS2. *SBK-07* offers the full experience with qualifying, the top-16 Superpole shootout, all the circuits and all the riders.

To be brutally honest, we're really not even into bike racing here at *OPS*, (we prefer the biff of V8 Supercars) but even

we can appreciate the amount of depth to *SBK-07*'s handling. The quality riding physics really do belie its budget price tag. Not even *Tourist Trophy* nailed the real sense of inertia and control quite as well as *SBK-07*. With all the riding aids disabled it's incredibly difficult to master. Make an error under brakes and you'll either skew wildly as you fight the tail of the bike from swinging around or you'll be thrown over the handlebars. Apply too much throttle out of a corner and your bike will jet out from under you. You can even turn on rider injuries and bike damage that'll end your

race after a major prang, and under real race rules you'll need to avoid false starts lest you earn yourself a penalty. Despite all this, *SBK-07* remains accessible, with plenty of forgiving aids and difficulty sliders catering for beginners.

The rider crash animations are a bit stodgy, the presentation is a little vanilla, the scope is narrow (albeit focused) and the appeal will be limited, but if you're not averse to straddling a crotch rocket in your spare time, don't miss it. **Luke Reilly**

PROS:

- Tough but satisfying handling
- You have a Troy Bayliss tattoo

CONS:

- You're a four-wheel freak
- You prefer something easier

VERDICT: A realistic and credible take on motorcycle racing, highly recommended for bike boffins.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

08

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Fear the forehand...

"Easy to pick up and hard to put down" is a phrase that immediately springs to mind when Sega's famed *Virtua Tennis* series rears up behind the white lines, racket in hand and one steely eye focused on stealing away hours of time that, if actually spent perfecting your handiness on the court in reality, might see you shooting into the top ten in no time. *V73*, however, is far more entertaining and not nearly as disheartening as being locked in a titanic battle of 'deuce' with the inhuman stamina of the actual Lleyton Hewitt. Quite to the contrary, when this situation arises in-game it's often the singularly most amusing thing that can happen. Witness the hugely well-animated frustration of players as they mess up a volley and proceed to lose it utterly, with all of the signature grunts and moans (yes, even 'Come on!' is accounted for in all its over-achieving sports kid glory).

There's a mountain of officially licensed

players and sponsors adorning your 20-year ascension from 300th in the world to the top spot, with big names like Andy Roddick, Sebastien Grosjean and the 'Russian hotski who can actually play tennis pretty good' Maria Sharapova lending their likenesses to *V73*'s air of officiality. What's more, the players each perform in a remarkably different (and accurate) fashion from one another, with Venus Williams sending veritable rockets of luminous lime ball careening your way while the sprinty Rafael Nadal covers half the court in the amount of time it takes Damir Dokic to have a restraining order slapped on him.

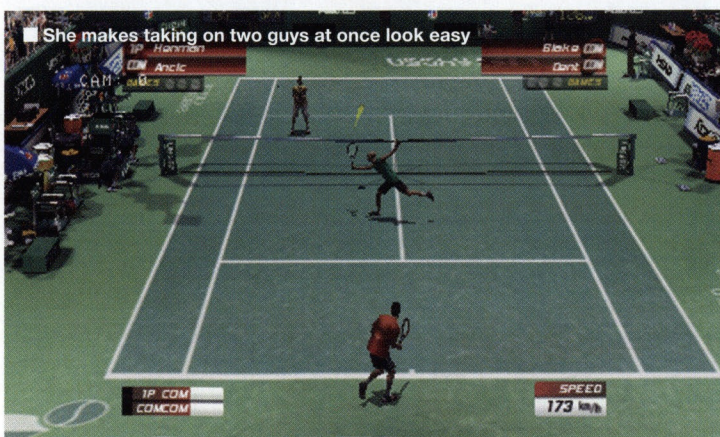
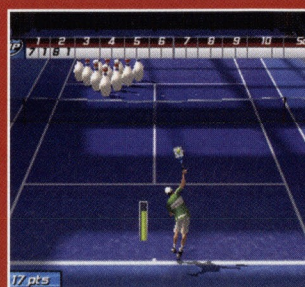
Controls are slick and precise, and the feel of slipping over a perilous grass court in a bid to dive under an intimidating slam is distinctly arcadey. That's not to say that there's a lack in gameplay mechanics – quite the opposite. There are a wide variety of shots available, with top-spin

shots, slices, drop shots, volleys, and even the humble lob all available to aid you in your righteous dominance of the court. It's a pity, however, that volleys and lobs are largely useless against the AI, who somehow manage to send these shots sailing back at you 99% of the time.

Although it might play like the dickens for the most part, it's slightly disappointing that Sega has concentrated on just honing the gameplay rather than reinventing it. This wouldn't be an issue if there weren't still some bugs lurking in the stands. Before each shot there's a slight 'skip' to the players which makes judging a deadly return fiddly, and it can be a little tricky to get your player into position for a shot. Luckily, these are exceptions and not the rules. For tennis aficionados and sports sim fans alike, this is undoubtedly the best ball whacking experience the PSP has going for it. Er, unless you're a bit kinky. **Toby McCasker**

"I MUST CRUSH YOU..."

As we've come to expect from the *Virtua Tennis* series, a slew of highly entertaining mini-games are available up for a quick bash. Each of them has a go at tuning up your stroke, serve, volley, or footwork, but hold tight – they're a lot of fun. 'Avalanche' has you scrambling to collect fruit while dodging giant tennis balls, 'Drum Topple' encourages you to smack your best hits into innocent oil drums, and our personal fave – 'Pin Crusher' – is just that: an insane game of tennis-bowling!



PROS:

- Brilliant fun
- Character creation is awesome

CONS:

- Occasional awkwardness
- McEnroe isn't commentating

OFFICIAL SCORE:

07

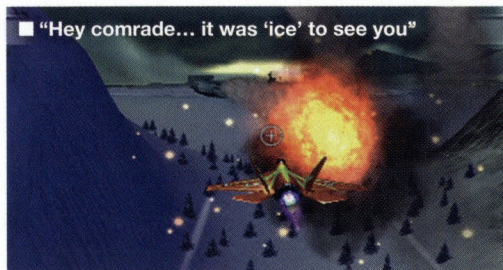
VERDICT: Quick, slick, and a joy to play. Start prepping that killer backhand.

■ **GENRE:** FLIGHT
 ■ **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** PLANET MOON
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-8
 ■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
 ■ **GAMESHARE:** YES
 ■ **WEB:** www.planetmoon.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The original *After Burner* is the granddaddy of the arcade flight sim scene, and Sega has wisely decided to resurrect this long dead franchise for the PSP, bringing the graphics up to date while retaining the furiously frantic game speeds the original was famous for.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



■ "That's why they call it the 'Cold' war, biatch! Am I on fire or what, Goose?" (awkward silence)



INFO BYTE

The original *After Burner* is actually the game that a pre-drug ravaged Edward Furlong played at the start of *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, before being chased out by the T1000.

AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

Feel the burn...



THREE'S A CROWD

There is little difference between the three pilots, besides some slightly differing sub-objectives in each mission. Much like a young Ricky Bobby, 'Sonic' just wants to go fast, and 'Bull' is a grizzled veteran after cold hard cash from war. 'Shinsei' on the other hand is an irritating career woman who is constantly sucking up to her superiors. She makes up for this, however, with her fantastic, oversized, cartoon knockers. All is forgiven 'Shinsei'... all is forgiven.



Re-establishing classic franchises is never a walk in the park. First off, you have to deal with the fact that the game design you are attempting to modernise is most likely old, and probably as outdated as the stonewash jeans/ hypercolour t-shirt combo you proudly donned to your first school disco. Secondly, you have to accommodate nostalgia, and all those gaming granddads who don't want anything from the original 'classic' to change. Walking that tightrope between the old and the new is possibly the biggest challenge developers face when resurrecting classics, and this is a challenge that *After Burner: Black Falcon*, for the PSP, faces head-on with gusto.

Playing as one of three hilariously archetypal pilots, choosing between 'Bull', 'Sonic', or 'Shinsei', *After Burner* has you rescuing three stolen fighter jets from the traitorous 'Black Falcons', a group of dastardly ex-soldiers up to some serious mischief. You must rescue the planes by any means necessary, which basically requires you to take those mischievous 'Falcons', bend them over your knee and spank them vigorously in some high flying aerial combat.

The 'on rails' approach from the original arcade classic remains for *Black Falcon*. Your flight path is rigidly set from the outset, and movement from this course is strictly

limited to evasive manoeuvres. Although this type of gameplay may seem outdated, it actually plays out in *After Burner's* favour, giving developers more time to focus on other aspects of the game.

Basically, not having to worry too much about guiding your jet through a three dimensional space frees up the *After Burner* experience, allowing the game to deliver the kind of epilepsy-inducing speeds that will leave you dribbling out of your arse. Those 'where the hell am I?' moments that so frequently plague flight sims are gloriously absent, allowing you to focus solely on blasting the bad guys out of the sky.

This means that *Black Falcon's* capacity for maximum blastage is through the roof: the basic gameplay is genuinely exhilarating. Hurtling at 'pants up asscrack' speeds, dealing with multitudes of enemy fighters, employing slick barrel rolls: everything occurs at such an awesome pace, nailing perfectly that arcade feel that the original *After Burner* was so famous for.

Unlike most flight sims, *After Burner* also succeeds in keeping the environments rich and varied. Many flight sims tend to be set solely over some anonymous ocean, causing the image of two contrasting blue colours to burn permanently on to your retina. Thankfully *After Burner* switches it up a bit with desert missions, Antarctic

missions, your bog-standard 'over the ocean' missions, and even a part when you fly through a volcano: SCORCHIN'...

Some might argue that *After Burner* is a touch on the shallow side. We, on the other hand feel that such people should be dropped in the face for their insolence. This is not a game for fat, balding, flight sim connoisseurs, this is a game that makes fun of its prerogative and screws the consequences. A better flight game for the PSP we have yet to lay our beady eyes on: as far as we're concerned this is the top gun. **Mark Serrels**



PROS:

- Faster than a whippet on 'roids
- Cool arcade-inspired action

CONS:

- You're a fat, flight sim buff
- Graphics are bit unpolished

VERDICT: Nicely done: an arcade flight sim that actually feels arcadey.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

08

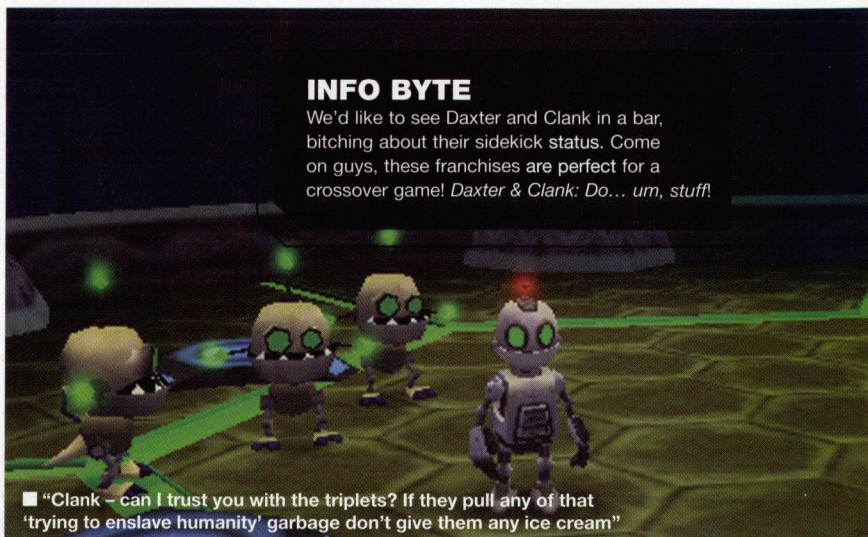
■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** HIGH IMPACT
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.us.playstation.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Ratchet & Clank are much beloved PS2 characters. They've had a bunch of adventures on the PS2 – most of which have been pretty sweet. Now the duo's adventures are being squeezed into the PSP. Can they take it or will this *Clank* tank?



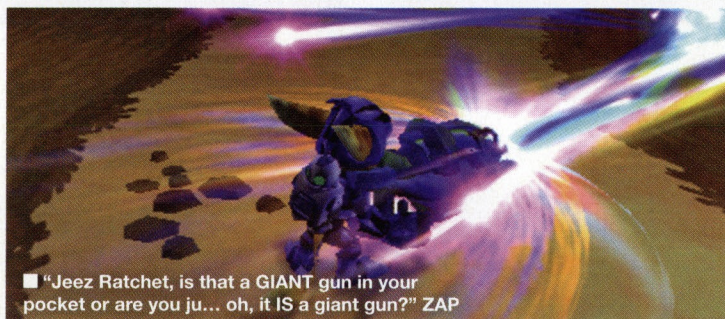
■ "This is my rifle, this is my wrench..."



INFO BYTE

We'd like to see Dexter and Clank in a bar, bitching about their sidekick status. Come on guys, these franchises are perfect for a crossover game! *Daxter & Clank: Do... um, stuff!*

■ "Clank – can I trust you with the triplets? If they pull any of that 'trying to enslave humanity' garbage don't give them any ice cream"



■ "Jeez Ratchet, is that a GIANT gun in your pocket or are you ju... oh, it IS a giant gun?" ZAP



RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

PlayStation
**BRONZE
AWARD**
8/10

It's time to blow up a bunch of stuff all over again. Take that, stuff!

Pies and sauce, guns and bullets, bi-curious teenage girls and giggly pillow fights, Ratchet & Clank. These are all examples of things that go together nicely. Let's take the latter example, Ratchet and robo-life partner Clank as they make their first move onto the PSP. Purists need not worry as they haven't changed the game into a kart racer or fighting game. This is *R&C* as traditional as you can get: platforming, puzzle-solving and big bastard weapons.

We open with Ratchet and Clank kicking back at the beach – soaking up some rays and generally digging on some well-earned rest and relaxation. Before long though they are pestered by a female fan wanting a picture of the duo. However she doesn't just want any old pic, she wants to see the lads in action: bustin' up some robots. With a little persuasion that's exactly what you'll be doing. Smacking tin heads with your wrench or blasting them with your weapon. Before you can say "holy plot device" the chick gets kidnapped and team *R&C* are off on another intergalactic adventure spanning various planets.

You get to one planet, do a bunch

of jumping, gliding, killing and such, find another clue, cue another plot twist and you're off again. No one's going to win any awards for the story here, but it's a satisfying enough adventure with generous 'continue points' and cool weapons like acid mines, doom bots, sniper rifles and standard projectile throwing weapons – all of which can be upgraded, pimped and made even weaponier. Clank also gets his own levels which involve solving puzzles, being giant and other favourites from adventures past.

Graphically it looks pretty much like a PS2 entry, which is impressive; although during the cut-scenes Ratchet is dressed as he was at the start of the game, whereas the Ratchet you're playing has donned all manner of armour. It's a minor quibble, but worth mentioning.

The controls take a little getting used

to. You use the analogue stick to move around and the D-pad to strafe. Strafing is very important as any *R&C* veteran knows – so you can experiment a little, making the analogue stick strafe and the D-pad move you. You can also change the camera settings, but really, like most PSP platformers, you are going to have a few camera niggles here and there. It's a little vexing when something kills you that you haven't even seen but it never reaches PSP-hurling levels of frustration.

Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters is rock solid, pretty and most of all a bloody fun platforming romp. It doesn't quite attain the levels of genius that *Daxter* did, but it comes close on several occasions. If you're looking for a little jumpin' and shootin' action you'd do well to pick this baby up. Faithful to the series and a hoot to boot – nice. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:

- Solid, enjoyable
- Loads of weapons, side games

CONS:

- You haven't played *Daxter* yet
- Some camera grief

VERDICT: *Size Matters* disproves its own title – this is just as fun as any of their PS2 adventures.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

08



RATCHET IN SPAAAAACE...

What's always been good about the *R&C* games is the fact they seem to sense when you get bored romping around a planet and bung you in a space battle level, or giant robot level and so on. It's pretty awesome to see this carried on for the PSP. Well done, kids.





INTERACTION

Epic Movie (on shelves June 27th) is a classic comedic satire, this time targeting huge films like *Pirates of the Caribbean* and mimicking colourful characters like Willy Wonka resulting in some great comedy moments that will have you in stitches!

To celebrate this release and to keep you entertained for hours BLOCKBUSTER® are giving you the chance to win 1 of 5 fabulous 20th Century Fox DVD packs featuring a lineup of their new June release titles including *Epic Movie*, *Idiocracy*, *American Pool*, *The Fountain* and *The Last King of Scotland*.

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FILM

Keanu Reeves gets animated in *A Scanner Darkly*, Jason Statham gets *Crank*-ed, everyone's trying to kill Jeremy Piven in *Smokin' Aces*, Will Ferrell gets sensitive in *Stranger Than Fiction* and more!



“Really?? That’s freakin’ awesome! So... should I just whip it out?”

DVD OF THE MONTH

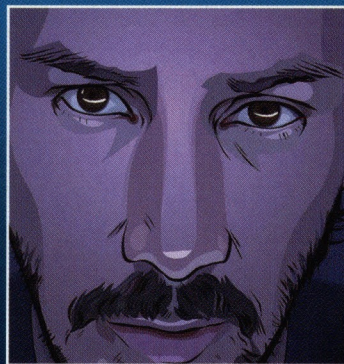
A SCANNER DARKLY (M)

STARRING: Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey, Jr., Woody Harrelson, Winona Ryder, Rory Cochrane
DIRECTOR: Richard Linklater

Director Richard Linklater certainly has an eclectic back-catalogue. He’s helmed teenage-angst movies like *Dazed and Confused* and *Suburbia*, chick flicks like *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset* and popcorn pieces like *The Newtown Boys* and *School of Rock*. *A Scanner Darkly*, however, is definitely some of the versatile director’s best work. Using an animation style called interpolated rotoscoping (an animation technique in which animators trace over live-action film movement, frame by frame – a technique Linklater has used before in *Waking Life*) *A Scanner Darkly* is a visually stunning film.

An adaptation of sci-fi author Philip K. Dick’s classic novel of the same name, *A Scanner Darkly* takes viewers on a trip

into a mind spinning out-of-control. It’s set in the not-too-distant future where America has lost the war on drugs and a new drug, Substance D, is causing something of an epidemic. The main character, Bob Arctor (Reeves) is a user living with several housemates who are also addicts. However, unbeknownst to them Arctor is an undercover narcotics agent codenamed Fred. Arctor hides his identity from his housemates by using Substance D and hides his identity from his police peers by using a high-tech ‘scramble suit’ that changes his voice and appearance. Arctor becomes addicted to Substance D and his world begins to fall apart – no longer sure what is real and what isn’t. Both a warning of the perils of drug use and the dangers

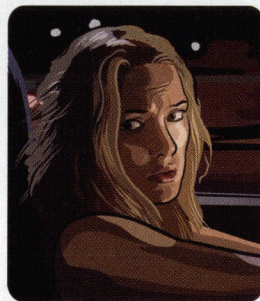
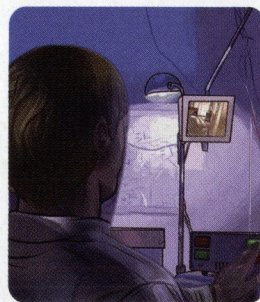


of over-surveillance, *A Scanner Darkly* is intelligent sci-fi with some fantastic performances.

VERDICT: Certainly one of the most faithful adaptations of Dick’s work, and easily the most thoughtful, *A Scanner Darkly* is a trip worth taking. Films this unique and this unusual are rare indeed.

★★★★

BEST BITS



YOU DON'T KNOW DICK

“The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.”

American author Philip K. Dick was born in Chicago in December 1928. He had a twin sister, Jane, although she

died eight weeks later.

Dick’s parents split up during his childhood and he moved with his mother to Berkeley, California, where he lived for most of his life. Dick became an author in 1952 and proceeded to publish a huge amount of material, particularly in the ‘50s and ‘60s (he wrote nearly 100 short stories and around two dozen

novels during these decades.

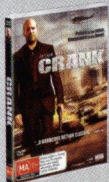
Despite his award-winning novels Dick was never really financially successful as a writer, working mainly for low-paying science fiction publishers and only really becoming popular after his death. You may not have read his material, but you’ve probably seen films based on them without even realising

it. Perhaps the most famous is *Blade Runner* (based on Dick’s 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), but there have been many more including *Total Recall* (based on the short story *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale*), *The visually spectacular Minority Report* and *Paycheck* (each based on short stories of the same names).

ACTION

CRANK (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Jason Statham, Amy Smart, Dwight Yoakam
■ **DIRECTOR:** Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor



Freelance hitman Chev Chelios has a problem. A rival has injected him with a synthetic poison while he was asleep. His only hope to stay alive long enough to get revenge (and an antidote) is to keep his adrenalin pumping. In spite of the premise there really isn't that much action. Tell us, why establish yourself as a martial arts star and then make a movie about the Chinese mob with no martial arts fights? The schizophrenic editing really is quite good, and you get to see Amy Smart's left boob, but it's just not enough to save it.

VERDICT: A B-grade auctioneer as intentionally hilarious as *Crank* could've been a classic. Unfortunately there's a lack of real action, and the sombre ending is incredibly unsatisfying for a film that never once took itself seriously.



ACTION

SMOKIN' ACES (R18+)

■ **STARRING:** Ben Affleck, Andy Garcia, Ray Liotta, Jeremy Piven, Ryan Reynolds
■ **DIRECTOR:** Joe Carnahan



Director Joe Carnahan's follow up to the tightly wound, gritty *Narc* is a flashy, ensemble piece about a group of rival hitmen all after the same target. In a nutshell *Smokin' Aces* sees central character Aces, who is testifying against the mob, slapped with a fat contract on his head, and there are multiple contract killers all out to get him. The performances are sound all around, but the one thing that really hurts *Smokin' Aces* is the lack of ANYBODY to root for. Quentin Tarantino and Guy Ritchie were making these kinds of films ten years ago, and better.

VERDICT: Confusing and perhaps a little too hip, we were trying hard not to like *Smokin' Aces* but we couldn't quite manage it. The cast just seem to be enjoying themselves so much it's tough not to get dragged along.



COMEDY

STRANGER THAN FICTION (M)

■ **STARRING:** Will Ferrell, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Emma Thompson
■ **DIRECTOR:** Marc Forster



Lonely IRS agent (Ferrell) starts to hear a voice narrating his every act. As his life is thrown into chaos by a voice only he can hear, the voice declares Harold is facing imminent death. The voice is actually a novelist struggling to find an ending for her latest book – specifically, how kill her main character. A restrained Ferrell is remarkably sincere and Gyllenhaal is sassy but sweet. If you come in expecting *Talladega Nights* or *Anchorman* you'll be disappointed. Those are hilarious films, but *Stranger Than Fiction* is different. Thoughtful and endearing, unbelievable yet accessible.

VERDICT: As clever as it is touching, this film is to Will Ferrell what *The Truman Show* was to Jim Carrey.



CASINO ROYALE (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Martin Campbell
■ **STARRING:** Daniel Craig



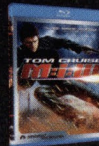
Casino Royale marks a move from MPEG2 compression in favour of the more advanced MPEG4 AVC codec. The results impress, and *Casino Royale* boasts a razor-sharp, vibrant picture and the slickest sound around. The bonus features are simply recycled from the DVD version, although some are in HD.

VERDICT: A posterboy for Blu-ray and a bloody good film to boot. Get it now.



M:I III (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** JJ Abrams
■ **STARRING:** Tom Cruise



The film itself is decent action fare without being remarkable, but the quality of the Blu-ray version is pretty astonishing. Props to Paramount for what is one of the better Blu-rays out there.

VERDICT: Pristine video and audio and stacks of HD extra content.



THE DEPARTED (MA15+)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Martin Scorsese
■ **STARRING:** Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Jack Nicholson



The gritty and unpredictable crime classic transfers superbly to this glorious 1080p Blu-ray. Boston has never looked so crisp.

VERDICT: What it lacks in special effects this dual-layer Blu-ray more than compensates for with its crystal clear transfer. One of the first must-haves.



TALLADEGA NIGHTS (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Adam McKay
■ **STARRING:** Will Ferrell, John C. Reilly



While still super crisp, it's light on the effects or stunning cinematography that normally warrant Blu-ray purchases.

VERDICT: Should only be considered by raving mad fans of both Ferrell and HD (yes, we're looking directly at you, Naz).

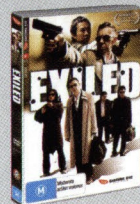


WHEN THE TREMOR BROTHERS MEET JACK DUPREE (BEN AFFLECK) IN *SMOKIN' ACES* ONE OF THEM SAYS, "LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE SHIT IN YOUR CEREAL" – A LINE SAID TO HIM IN *CHASING AMY* AND BY HIM IN *JAY AND SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK*.

THRILLER

EXILED (M)

■ **STARRING:** Simon Yam, Richie Yen, Francis Ng, Anthony Wong
■ **DIRECTOR:** Johnnie To



From the director of *The Mission*, *Exiled* is a Hong Kong triad flick like many that have gone before it, but the execution is so good it stands head and shoulders above the pack. Set in Macau in 1998, a year before the Portuguese colony is due to be handed back to the Chinese, *Exiled* is the story of a man returning to his native Macau with his wife and newborn child and the two sets of assassins on his trail. One pair means to kill him, the other means to save him. The rub? All five men are childhood friends. Brotherhood, loyalty and honour are all explored in this modern Hong Kong western.

VERDICT: A taut, gripping thriller in any language, *Exiled* is the best film to come out of Hong Kong since *SPL*, and one the better in recent memory.



ACTION

DÉJÀ VU (M)

■ **STARRING:** Denzel Washington, Val Kilmer, Jim Caviezel
■ **DIRECTOR:** Tony Scott



Déjà Vu is a sci-fi popcorn picture set in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. The city is again struck by tragedy when a ferry explodes, killing over 500 people. ATF officer Doug Carlin (Washington) is recruited to track down the mass-murderer using a top-secret FBI gadget that allows you to view the past on screen. Carlin becomes more and more obsessed and decides to risk his life, in a surprising way. Like *Spy Game*, *Man on Fire* and *Domino* before it, *Déjà Vu* is a triumph of slick cinematography. Even if they're let down by weak or formulaic stories, Tony Scott films are always a treat to watch.

VERDICT: It gets a little too wacky for its own good at times, but Washington does keep you hanging in there with his powerful on-screen presence.



TV

AMERICAN DAD! SEASON TWO (M)

■ **STARRING:** Seth MacFarlane, Wendy Schaal, Scott Grimes, Rachael MacFarlane
■ **DIRECTOR:** Various



From the slightly warped mind of Seth MacFarlane, *American Dad!* this animated sitcom shares much with MacFarlane's *Family Guy*. Explores the misadventures of CIA Deputy Director Stan Smith, his former party girl wife Francine, his left-wing hippy daughter Hayley, his loyal nerdy son Steve, camp alien houseguest Roger and a talking goldfish Klaus (with the brain of a German winter Olympian who has a crush on Francine – "Now, straddle mein bowl!"). Refreshing politically-incorrect, *American Dad!* spoofs everything from terrorism to homosexuality.

VERDICT: *American Dad!* isn't half as hilarious as *Family Guy* but it's some of the more entertaining TV around.





■ "So Jack distracts Davy Jones with his poncy swagger, while I sneak around and go for the atomic wedgie... That's just crazy enough to work"

CINEMA

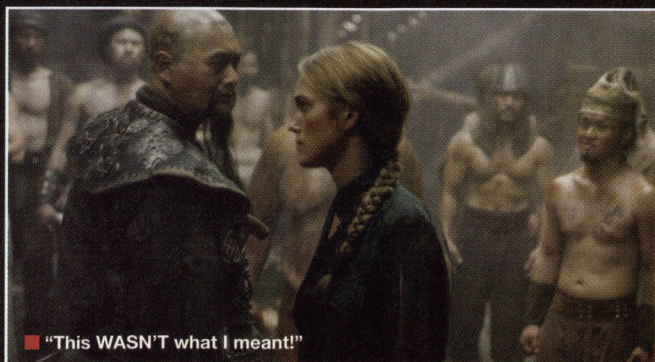
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END (M)

■ **Director:** Gore Verbinski **Starring:** Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom, Keira Knightley, Elizabeth Swann, Geoffrey Rush, Chow Yun-Fat

The third of the swashbuckling *Pirates* films, *At World's End* sees Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) and Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) team up with former foe Captain Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) in a quest to free Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) from Davy Jones' locker. All the while the terrifying ghost ship, The Flying Dutchman, and Davy Jones, are wreaking destruction across the seven seas under the control of the East India Trading Company. After finding their way to Singapore and confronting the notorious Chinese pirate Say Feng (Chow Yun-Fat) they'll head to the ends of the earth for one final epic battle to decide the future of the pirate way. Opens May 24.



■ "I'll do it on one condition: Elizabeth beats my entire crew!"



■ "This WASN'T what I meant!"

COMING SOON

ZODIAC (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Jake Gyllenhaal
A thriller from director David Fincher (*Fight Club*) about a serial killer known as the Zodiac and his San Francisco killing spree. Opens May 17

SHREK THE THIRD

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Mike Myers
Shrek becomes King of Far Far Away, much to his disgust. Opens June 7

OCEAN'S THIRTEEN (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** George Clooney
Ocean and his crew team up with former nemesis Andy Garcia to take down a common enemy, played by Al Pacino. Opens June 14

HOSTEL PART II

(Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Lauren German
From director Eli Roth, three young Americans studying art in Rome set off for the weekend trip from hell. Opens May 31

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



SMARTIE PANTS

The first image from Warner Bros. upcoming comedy *Get Smart*, an adaptation of the classic 1960s TV show of the

same name, has surfaced. No details are known about the film itself, but it stars Steve Carell (*The 40-Year-Old Virgin*), Anne Hathaway, The Rock, Terence Stamp and Alan Arkin.

The film is not scheduled to hit theatres until this time next year.



YIPPEE-KI-YAY

The full trailer, and new name (at least in Australia) has been released for the fourth instalment of the *Die*

Hard series. *Die Hard 4.0* (formerly dubbed *Live Free or Die Hard*) sees a grizzled John McClane taking on a bunch of cyber-terrorists. The trailer features some pretty wicked stuff, including a truck versus a jet, some gnarly shooty action and some grin-inducing dialogue, including the ultimate *Die Hard* quip – "Yippee-Ki-Yay motherf... (it trails off in the trailer, you know, for the kids). If you're not excited about another *Die Hard* movie you might as well trade in your penis for a full refund, because you ain't a man. Sorry.



BURN BABY BURN

Brad Pitt has joined George Clooney and Frances McDormand, signing on to play a role in the Coen Brothers

(*The Big Lebowski*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*) black comedy, *Burn After Reading*.

Joel and Ethan Coen co-wrote the screenplay, which Joel will direct, about a CIA agent who loses the disc of the book he is writing.



BOURNE TO BE ALIVE

The first glimpses of the third *Bourne* film have been made public in the shape of a short teaser trailer. *The Bourne*

Ultimatum picks up with Bourne on the run again from his former employers, hunting down his past to secure a future. Bourne will travel from Moscow, Paris, Madrid, London Tangier and New York City – all the while fending off cops, hired-killers and federal agents all keen to take him down permanently.

ULTIMATE PS3 GADGETS

Make your PS3 look and sound like Britney Spears did six years ago...

SONY BRAVIA SXRD KDS-60R2000

■ **PRICE:** \$4999
■ **WEB:** www.sony.com.au

This 60-inch monster, hooked up to a PS3, will make you weep tears of sheer awesome. Featuring a mode specifically built for gaming that automatically tweaks settings for PS3 pleasure, no TV can match this Bravia when it comes to videogames; a god amongst mere mortals.

B & W XT4

■ **PRICE:** \$4299
■ **WEB:** www.e-hifi.com.au

The XT4's tweeters scatter sound like a Mac-10 sprays bullets. If you like your ears completely shredded with insanely detailed trebular goodness, then these speakers are your huckleberry. If you've got the dough, then these are quite possibly the best tweeters on the market.

B & W PV1

■ **Price:** \$2,200
■ **Web:** www.e-hifi.com.au

B & W's spherical sub makes a perfect wall shaking centrepiece for the modern living room. The orb design reduces pesky internal vibrations and terminates unwanted distortion with extreme prejudice. After busting out a couple of laps of *MotorStorm* with this bad boy, you will undoubtedly be 'totally addicted to bass'...

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HELP

SPIDER-MAN 3

All the info you need to be a friendly neighborhood Spider-Man and use your power responsibly!



MAD BOMBER

Just a tutorial mission, so just do what Mr. Campbell says and get used to your abilities.

APOCALYPSE




1 Catch of the day



Pretty basic stuff here. The gang has strung up an innocent on a crane and is lowering him into the river, and you have to stop the crane before he drowns. In between beating up the crims, look for an opening in the combat to occasionally activate the crane by running up to it and pressing the square button. After about eight gang members have been laid out, your job becomes a lot easier and you'll be able to save the guy.

2 The Bomb Shelter

The thugs are stirring up trouble again in the subway tunnels, those dastardly villains, so run down the stairs to the train platform, and you'll hear two commuters having a conversation. After they finish, you'll get a brief cut-scene where Spidey




rides a train deeper into the tunnels. Once the train stops, beat up the three gang members, head through the passageway to the left and follow the music to the next area.

Once you arrive at their hideout, there'll be about a dozen thugs and three hostages. Rather than charging straight into the room and taking on all the gangbangers at once, you can thin a few out first by dragging them one at a time out of the room and into the tunnel outside. Do this by using your web with the  button and pull them towards you by pushing down on the left analogue stick. Once you've taken a few of them out, enter the hideout and take care of the rest, judiciously using  to avoid damage. After the thugs are taken care of, free the three hostages to your right by walking up to them and pressing .

Next you'll need to save the train conductor who has been tied up on the railway tracks. Sprint through the door ahead using the  button and untie him with . Now just boost-swing down the tunnel and clean up the last group of thugs on the next train platform and you're done.

3 Power Grid

This time you've got to stop the gang from blowing up a power station, so as the cops drive off, jump on the car and hitch a free ride. After a short trip, you'll come to a blockade where the police are having a shootout with two thugs. Take them out and you'll move on to the next part.

Jump onto the cop car again and it will race off and chase after a van. Once it's in sight, jump onto the car, fight off the passenger and take out the engine by pressing , and then mashing  and  alternately. After the van comes to a stop, finish off the driver and you'll move on to the next phase.


Next you'll need to speed off to the power station to take care of the bomb. Once you arrive, the van that's carrying the bomb will have crashed into a transformer, and will be electrified. To get to the bomb, you have to shut down the power, and you'll have to do it quick because the bomb is armed. You can take out the two thugs or ignore them here – the bomb is the focus. Use your Spider Sense to find the power switches easily, and after you've shut down all four, grab the bomb and swing quickly

over to the harbor to get rid of it before it blows.

Now that the bomb threat is taken care of, the gang isn't too happy about it. You'll have to take on a group of five, including three heavy hitters. This is one of your first tough fights, so take out the weaker two first and try to wear down the rest by juggling them with air combos and using your super moves. If it becomes a bit hard, you can use the building as cover and split up the enemies that way. The gang boss doesn't seem to take damage from much except counters, so wait until you have him on his own, activate your spider reflexes when he comes near and counter his attacks until he stops getting up.

THE LIZARD

1 In Search of Lizards

This starts off as a tutorial for photo missions. Jump down to the hot dog cart and take a photo of it by activating the camera (by pressing down on the d-pad) and then once you've got the cart framed, press  to take the picture. Then swing over to the

guy in the 'Larry the Lizard' costume, take another quick snapshot of him and take the photos back to JJ at the Daily Bugle. He won't be impressed, sending you to Gramercy Park for more shots.

Once you head out, you'll find some panicked citizens. Follow his directions and use your Spider Sense to find the lizard creature. Jump over the fence to get a good shot, but don't get too close or you'll scare it off. Take its picture and continue searching for more lizards.

At the next sighting, you'll have to fight off some thugs. Take care of them and then check out what they were running from. Use your Spider Sense to pick up the lizard's trail. Follow the trail that heads out of the alley to the right and you'll come to a hot dog cart. Take a shot of the lizard and head back to the Daily Bugle to finish up.

MAD BOMBER

2 Subway Disaster

Follow the markers into the subway and beat up the multitude of goons you find in there (man are we tired of talking about beating up 'goons'). Use the computer on the right to search for clues, then defuse all the bombs in the room with your webs.

Next, make your way to the next bomb, using the passing train to open the grate. Once defused, head off to the next bomb, turn the valve to lower the water level and head into the alcove and disarm the bomb.

Follow the next marker and you'll find some of Carlyle's goons setting up a bomb in a train carriage. Take out the goons and then flip the lever on the right twice to turn the turntable and give you access to the bomb. After it's defused,

stop the bomb laden train and you're good to go.

MARY JANE THRILL RIDE

Mission 1

Simply fulfill Mary Jane's requests to swing high, low or fast and make it to the destination within the time limit.

ARSENIC CANDY

1 Shop 'til You Drop

Take out the gang members at the shop heist and then head off to their hideout. Once there, you'll have a large group of them to fight off. Just keep an eye on the hostages while you're fighting and take 'em all out. After they're taken care of, stop the falling chandelier with charged punches as prompted and that's a wrap.

2 Bear Necessity

Take care of the gang members stealing the teddy bears outside and head into the factory. Once they're taken care of, follow the getaway chopper over the Queensboro Bridge. Once it lands, take out the goons and head inside the burning building to save the people trapped. Remember to use your Spider Sense if you're having trouble finding them. Once you save the second guy, the building will begin to collapse. Head to the back right corner, jump through the hole in the roof to the next floor and head to the front of the building to find the hole in the roof to exit safely.

DEWOLFE

1 A Cry for Help

Tail the car without being seen. Once you arrive at the warehouse, drop in through the skylight and get a photo of the crooks making the exchange with the dirty cops. Once you have the evidence, chase after the getaway car and take out the gang members trying to escape and head back to Dewolfe to hand in the evidence.

DRAGON TAIL

1 High Speed Pursuit

Take out the thugs at the crime scene, and then head after the van they steal, using your Spider Sense to follow the trail of statues that it leaves. Once you find the van, take out the thugs to complete the mission.

THE LIZARD

2 Connors the Lizard

Head down the grating straight ahead into the sewer and take care of the lizards. Drop down the open manhole in the middle of the room, take out a couple more lizards and follow the pathway to the upper left. After swinging along the passageway, move ahead and clear out the room of all lizards. Once they're taken care of smash the lights and quickly get out of the water before you get electrocuted. Once you take care of both lights, the blockage ahead will be cleared and you can proceed.

Move through the opening and swing down the passage to the left. A large lizard will break through a wall to the left, so take care of him and all his friends inside. Continue ahead through

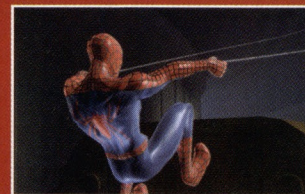
HOW TO SHOOT WEB

As it's your main mode of transport for getting through Manhattan, you might as well get used to the finer points of web swinging.

Coordinating standard web swinging (Ⓛ) with boosting (Ⓜ) is the core of moving around accurately. For maximum speed, boost around midswing and let go of your web line shortly thereafter. To gain height, charge your jump while you're swinging (with Ⓢ), boost late (in the upstroke) of your swing and release jump as you let go of the web line.

For more precision when turning, just do a standard swing and lay off the boost, and always remember you can use your air jump (tap ⓧ midair) for fine adjustments to your trajectory.

Don't forget the web zip (tap Ⓜ) either! It's a good way to get speed up quickly from a standing start, and it's also very useful for short hops, clearing groups of small buildings and getting around quickly when there are no tall buildings around for conventional web swinging.



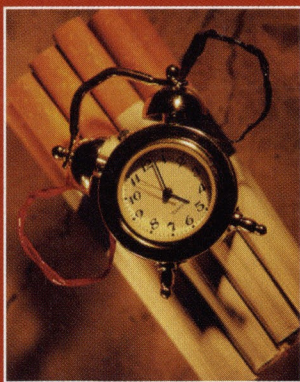
■ Spiderman: the oldest swinger in town

BOMB DEFUSING CLASS 101

Spidey will be taking care of more than a few explosive devices in his adventures, and while most of the facets of bomb disposal are simple button presses and tests of reactions, the bomb circuit minigame where you have to send the electrical pulse through to the defusing circuit can be pretty tricky.

Your best course of action is to pause for a second and mentally trace through the wiring of the path that you will need to send the pulse. Once you have charted out the path, set about opening up the path gates with the appropriate buttons. Note that once the pulse has passed through a gate, further button presses will not cut off the signal, so just worry about what's ahead of the pulse, and not what's behind it.

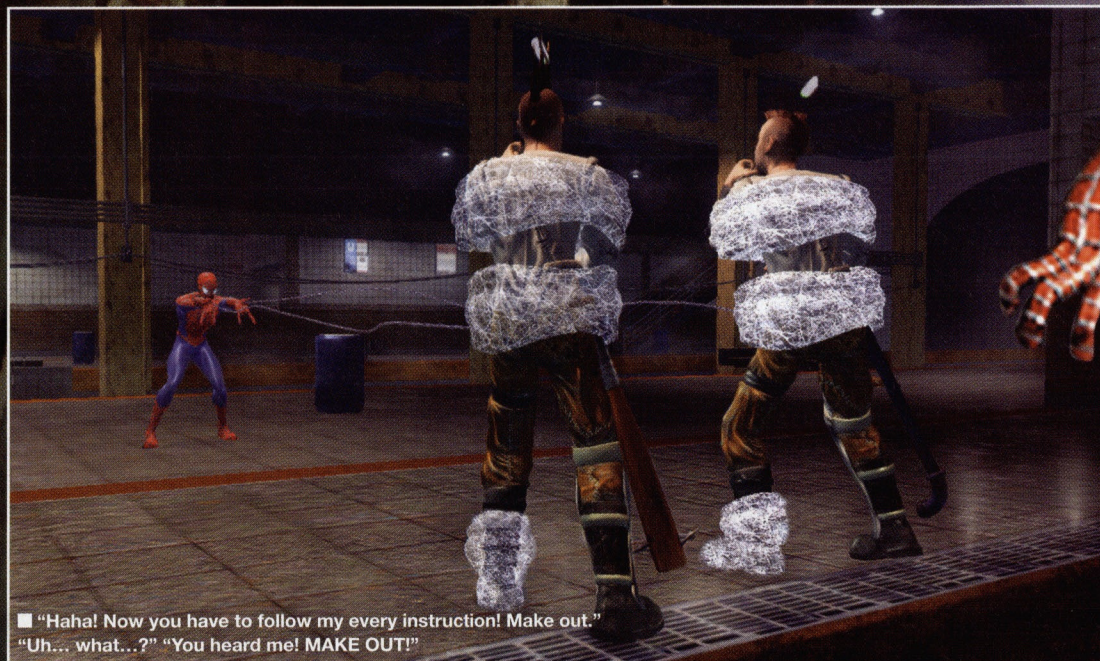
If the pulse fails to reach the defusing circuit during its pass, then all the gates will reset randomly. Don't get frustrated. Focus and you'll get there.



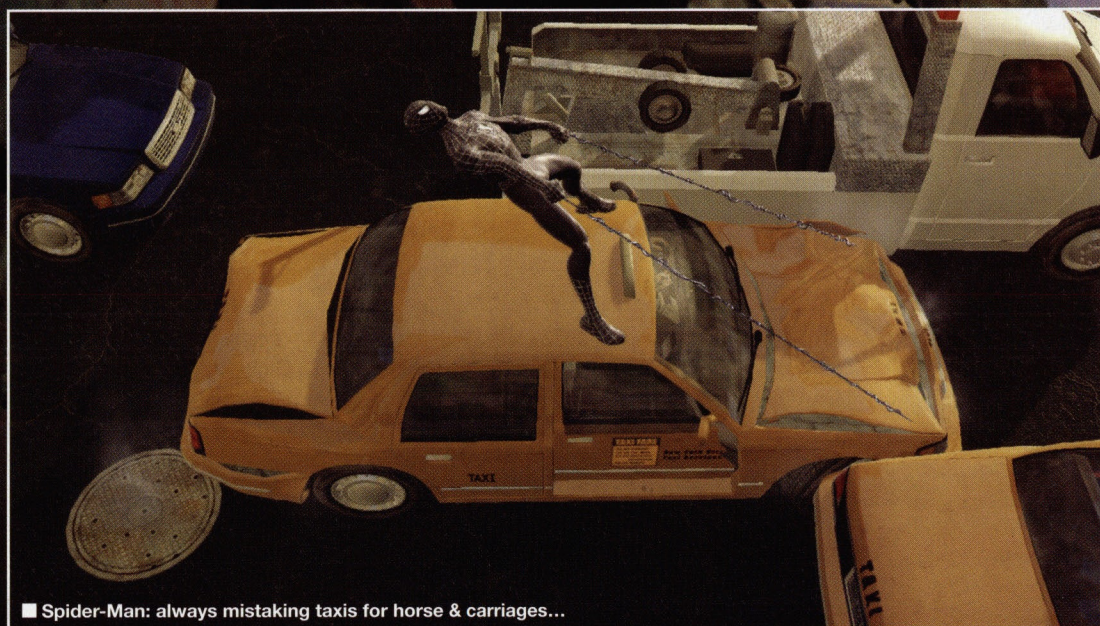
the room and then follow the passage to the right. Taking out lizards on the way, head through the archway to the right and you'll come to another blockage. Eliminate the lizards and Web Rodeo two barrels into the blockage to clear it. Then follow the passage on the right and drop down the shaft at the end.

Head through the passage on the right, fight off more lizards and turn the gears to open the gates ahead. Follow the signs marked 'Water Purification Room' and you'll sight Connors. Follow the passage avoiding the steam jets and you'll chase after Connors and in turn get chased by a massive drill. Swing down the passage ahead and aim for the gaps to avoid the drill.

Head through the doorway on the right and you'll be in a room full of conveyor belts. Stand on the belts to lure Connors to you, activate your spider reflexes to avoid his attacks and force him into the grinders. Once you've delivered the finisher, you'll have to fight Connors in the next room. Just use light attacks, activate your spider reflexes to



■ "Haha! Now you have to follow my every instruction! Make out."
"Uh... what...?" "You heard me! MAKE OUT!"



■ Spider-Man: always mistaking taxis for horse & carriages...

avoid his standard attacks, jump out of the way when he charges his special attack and you'll beat him easily. Just bear in mind in his second state he does long combos – it's best to use reflexes to dodge before jumping away. Now complete the quick time sequence to complete the mission.

NEW GOBLIN

The Birth of New Goblin

After Harry attacks you, you'll go for a high speed ride on his hover board. Just follow the prompts to dodge his attacks, and when it prompts you to attack, press the button twice for maximum damage. If in doubt, just activate your reflexes whenever a prompt comes up.

Eventually the fight will go to street level, so just use plenty of reflexes and pound on him 'til you can pound no more. As Harry gets weak, you'll have to perform another quick time sequence, bash the buttons successfully and then rush him off to hospital for treatment. Stupid idiot.

MAD BOMBER

3 Jetpack Bombings

Jump over to the adjacent building, take out the henchmen and defuse the bomb. It'll be a little more complicated than the previous bombs, but just think it through and you'll be fine. Head to the next bomb, defuse it and then kick it into the bay, remembering to hold down **△** to charge up for extra distance, and aim is also important. Head to the third bomb, punt it into the water too, and then round up the jetpack henchman.

When you catch up to the jetpack guy, you can grapple him with circle, and cause him to fly into buildings by guiding his flightpath with the left analogue stick. Take him out easily this way and head off to take care of the remaining bombs and henchmen in similar fashion.

4 Carlyle's Plan

Swing over to the George Washington Bridge as fast as

you can, take out the henchmen at the bomb site and set about defusing the bomb. It turns out that the bomb is a diversion, so head over to the factory after the explosion and check it out. Once you're there, fend off some goons and turn the release valves until all three are in the green – note that each valve affects the readout on at least one other gauge, so you might need to fiddle with them a little.

After the valves are sorted, beat up more goons, rescue one stranded under the wreckage and search the computer for info, using your spider sense to find it if necessary. Head through the doorway below, take out the heavy henchman and move through into the tank room. It'll be swarming with henchmen, so head straight up to the gallery to your right with all the gas cylinders on it. Take out any henchmen up there and use the gas cylinders as missiles to take out the main tank. After it's taken care of, chase after the Mad Bomber and complete the quick time event to finish the mission.



■ Spiderman: superhero, scientist, shopaholic...



■ "Mr Face. Meet Mr Fist, he's been dying to meet you"

5 Death to J. Jonah

The first part of the mission is a series of bomb defusings linked by quick time events. Undoubtedly the toughest bombs yet, so if you're finding it tough, take a second to gather your thoughts and plot out the path you need to use to get to the defusing circuit, and then go about making it happen. It pays to plan ahead.

Now chase the Bomber's chopper, catch JJ as they throw him out the back and keep up with the heli using boosted swings to prevent JJ's collar bomb from going off prematurely. Things going off prematurely: not a good look.

Eventually you'll come to a showdown with the chopper on a rooftop. Just wait until its missiles get close, activate your spider reflexes and send the missiles back at it with **Ⓢ** button, and take cover/use reflexes/jump when the going gets tough. Note there are health pickups on the roof if you're running low.

DEWOLFE

2 Dirty Cops

Head off to the toy factory and search around the area, using the meter to work out if you're getting warm. Once you find the exchange, use your spider sense to find the spots for taking evidence photos, and be careful of the rooftop guards. Use reflexes to avoid their attacks, but be especially careful to avoid knocking them into the alley below. Take one out quickly or sneak into a vantage point so you can get a photo of the money changing hands. After you have the shot you need, drop into the alley, take them all out and head back to Dewolfe to hand in the evidence.

3 Suspicious Invitation

Head off to the rendezvous point and get photos of all the dirty cops. When Dewolfe arrives, she'll get taken out, so drop in and take down all the dirty cops. When you've cleaned them up good and proper, one of them

will scoop Dewolfe into a nearby car and make for the bay; chase after that no-good copper. Boost jump onto the car and perform the quick time event to save her.

DRAGON TAIL

2 When the Bell Tolls

Web over to the surrounding buildings and take out the three gang members with rocket launchers before they take out the collector. Use your radar or spider sense to find them. After that a chopper drops a bunch of thugs on the roof. Clean them up next. Then jump up to the chopper and perform the quick time event to take care of business.

3 Collection Protection

Take out the two goons on foot and then jump onto the gang car and take care of it and its passengers. Once it's taken care of, jump onto the delivery van and keep an eye out for ambushes using your spider sense.

You'll run into a few gang members with rocket launchers, gang cars on the way and a big ambush at the end. Deal with them accordingly, protect the van, and you're done.

MARY JANE THRILL RIDE

Mission 2

This one's even trickier than before. Just accommodate MJ's requests, but due to the time limit, it's probably best to ignore any gangs you run into on the way. Keep an eye out for hearts to score extra points, and watch your web placement when you're swinging high and you'll do it easily.

CHECK BACK SOON FOR PART 2 OF OUR SPIDER-MAN 3 GUIDE!

RE-PLAY

Think you've seen and done everything in your game collection? Wrong!

WHAT IS RE-PLAY?

Do you play a game once from start to finish, shelve it and move on to the next? Tsk tsk, dear reader. You're really not getting enough bang for your buck. Which is why we created the Re-Play section, to delve back into your collection and challenge you to do and see things you may have missed on your first play through. Each month we're going to set records for you to break, expose cheats for you to try and uncover secrets for you to seek out. We also want you to participate by setting challenges for other readers to attempt or sending in funny screenshots from your latest gaming session. We also do requests, so if there's a particular game you want us to crack wide open, let us know. Email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or snail mail us at OPS Re-Play, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW, 1355.

OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

SPIDER-MAN 3

In the legendary words of legendary anchorman Ron Burgundy: "Spider-Man's balls!" this official challenge is damn near impossible. After taking our sweet time finding the Empire State Building and climbing all the way to the top like a tiny, spandex clad King Kong, we were surprised and quite excited to discover the awesome 'Skydiving Challenge'. It's a shame then that we couldn't complete the damn thing.

So this is our official challenge. Climb to the top of the afore-mentioned Empire State Building, partake in the skydiving challenge, then proceed to soar through all 12 rings, inside the designated time, and finish up on the landing pad. Manage all three of those impossible tasks and we might just feel obliged to send you some sort of reward. Please email your proof to the usual address, or email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au

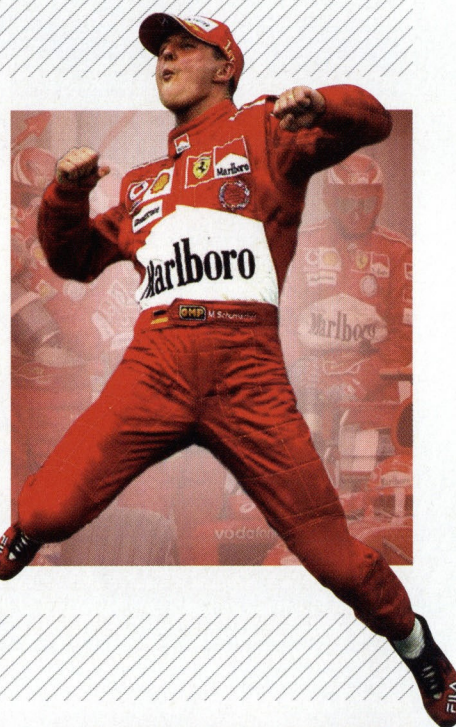


OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

FORMULA 1

All right, all right. We are the first to admit that we fully suck ass at realistic driving games. In fact, with exception of Luke in full beard-stroking mode, here at OPS we have an extremely rare condition that forces our thumbs and index fingers to be completely allergic to any form of brake button. We are pretty much biologically inclined to keep our fingers constantly forced on the accelerator.

It's for this reason that we are *not* issuing this month's F1 challenge. We thought that since F1 is so ridiculously realistic we would turn to the world of reality for the challenge of a lifetime. Michael Schumacher's record lap time of 1'14.439 at Monaco in 2004 is still looked upon as an example of driving perfection. We want you to try and beat it, since we have no holy hope in hell of doing so. You can use any car of your choice, but you must use manual transmission. As usual please email us pics proving your time to ops@derwenthoward.com.au

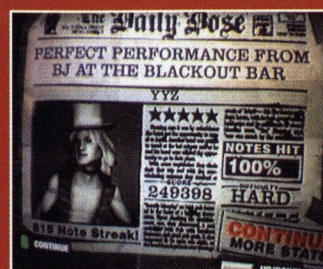


READER CHALLENGES

GUITAR HERO II

Sometimes you have to ask yourself: is it possible to improve on perfection? When we asked you guys to try and best our sadly departed 'axemaster' Tristan's *Guitar Hero II* scores on 'Carry on Wayward Son', 'Sweet Child of Mine' and 'YYZ' we thought he was

unbeatable. But lo and behold a fellow by the name of Bjan Mara has come and registered a score that makes him look like a fingerless gibbon. Just check out those scores! Bjan has set the gauntlet - can you do better? Give it a bash and send it to us.



CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Seen something funny in a game? Send it in!



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

Resistance: Fall of Man has that old-school charm. For some weird reason, playing the game gives you that creepy feeling like when you first walk into your grandparents house. Maybe the game doesn't smell like stale cat piss, or make you feel all claustrophobic and weird, but it does have that atmosphere of another age, or another time – the kind of time when garden gnomes were cool. 'But garden gnomes have never been cool' we hear you cry. Well, maybe so, but *Insomniac* has been pushing gnomes



hardcore, trying to get those little bearded fishermen back into vogue in *Resistance: Fall of Man*.

Yep, believe it or not, *Resistance* is absolutely hoaching with GARDEN GNOMES. Those mischievous buggers are everywhere, hiding out in the most random of places. We have a couple of gnome-shots, but we want more. We want you to search for these garden gnomes and get a decent pic if possible, then do whatever the hell you like with them. Smash them to smithereens, whatever. Stupid gnomes...

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION



Oblivion has its fair share of cool secrets: secret armour, secret weapons, even some secret hookers if you look hard enough (apparently). But we recently came across a pretty insane mission that somehow managed to make us forget about our search for pixelated prozzies for at least thirty minutes. Head to the village of Cheyndindall, and look for an artist named Rytte, you won't find him, but you will find his wife and one of the paintings he left behind before going inexplicably missing.

If you walk towards this painting and 'activate' it you will get bizarrely sucked into the painting to help rescue the artist, who got so involved in his work that he actually became a part of it. Weird. Once inside, the entire art design of the game changes becoming almost like a digitized Van Gogh-esque version of *Oblivion*, with vivid brush strokes replacing the realistic polygons present before. You also get to attack painted trolls with turpentine, which is pretty hilarious. Well worth a look.

EASTER EGGS



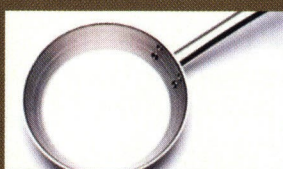
Virtua Fighter 5

Hold **Ⓢ** at the opening screen to hear the old school 'SEEEGAA'... ah, nostalgia...



Def Jam Icon

Play as that chubby idiot Fat Joe by pressing **↓**, **Ⓢ**, **Ⓢ**, and **→** on the title screen.



Virtua Tennis 3

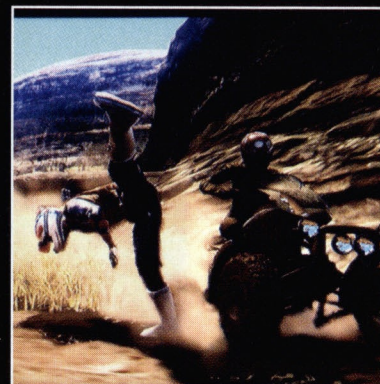
Unlock a frying pan as a tennis racket by getting three strikes in a row in the pin crusher mini game.

MOTORSTORM FUNNIES

MotorStorm is possibly the most photogenic game ever made, so when we asked you guys to send pics of the most wince inducing crashes you had experienced, we expected a response that would make Johnny Knoxville cringe and say "Mmmhmm girlfriend, that looks painful". Well, we got what we wanted and a whole lot more. Check these bad boys out:



This is, in a word, wrong. The kind of injury that makes you feel all funny inside by just looking at it. Gruesome.



Man was not meant to stretch that way. I thought Jean Claude Van Damme in *Kickboxer* was the only dude who could pull that off? And he's a hermaphrodite...



This cannot end well...

CODES, HINTS, TIPS, UNLOCKABLES AND MORE!

CHEATS

Get the winning edge
with *OPS'* tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Alternate Endings

To unlock different endings, complete the required task during the final mission before the bomb is disarmed.

Ending A (Good Ending)

Have NSA trust above 33% and save at least two of the three targets.

Ending B (Normal Ending)

Have NSA trust below 33% and save all three of the targets OR save only one target and have NSA trust above 33%.

Ending C (Bad Ending)

Destroy all three targets OR destroy two targets and have NSA trust below 33%.

Bonus Equipment

Complete the special objectives in single player mode to unlock new equipment.

EMP Grenade

Complete secondary objectives in Iceland assignment.

EMP Grenade Attachment

Complete secondary objectives in Cozumel assignment.

Explosive Sticky Camera Attachment

Complete secondary objectives in Iceland assignment.

Frag Grenade Attachment

Complete primary objectives in JBA HQ 3.

Gas Grenade

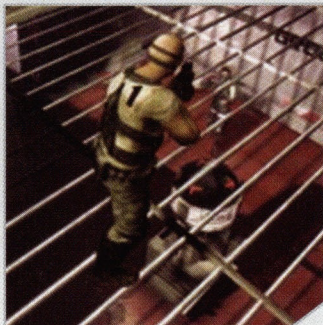
Complete primary objectives in JBA HQ 1.

Hacking Device Software Upgrade

Complete secondary objectives in Shanghai assignment.

Sonic Grenade Attachment

Complete primary objectives in JBA HQ 2.



PS3 PS2 PSP

MOTORSTORM

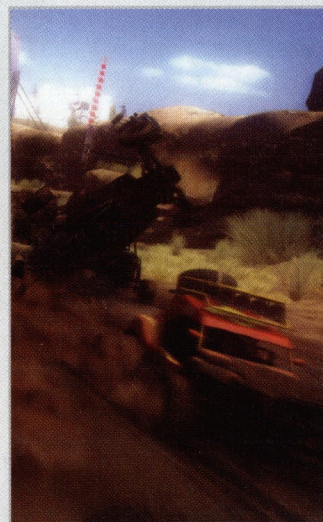
To enter the code, simply hold down all the buttons as shown. As well as pushing the analog sticks down, you will also need to move the stick in the direction shown in the brackets below. You will here a noise if the cheat is done correctly.

Big Heads (ATVs and bikes)

Pause the game, then hold **△+□+○+×** and R3 (whilst pushing the analogue stick right) and L3 (whilst pushing the analogue stick left).

Unlock Everything

At main menu hold **△+□+○+×** and R3 (whilst pushing the analogue stick up) and L3 (whilst pushing the analogue stick down).



PS3 PS2 PSP

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Duplicate Items

To duplicate your items in the PS3 version of *Oblivion* do the following:

- 1) Get two magic scrolls of the same type (the scrolls must NOT be stolen)
- 2) Click on the scroll twice.
- 3) Drop the item from your inventory that you want duped.
- 4) Exit inventory and collect your items.

Notes:

- Certain weapons and armor won't work
- The health of the item must be 100 (Get it repaired to be safe)
- The charge on a magical item must be full



PS3 PS2 PSP

MADDEN NFL 07

QB will have 100% accuracy for one half
WROA0R

The opponent throws lob passes for one half.
5LAW00

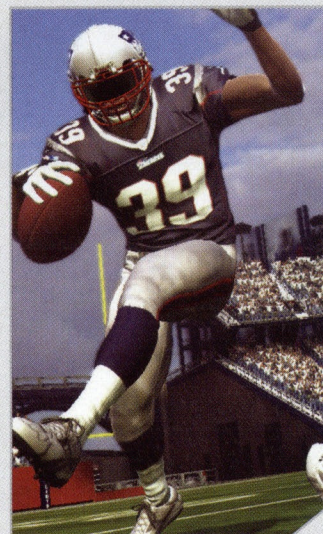
Unlock the 1958 Colts Gold card
B57QLU

Unlock the 1966 Packers Gold card
1PL1FL

Unlock the 1968 Jets Gold card
MIE6W0

Unlock the 1970 Browns Gold card
CL2TOE

Unlock the 1972 Dolphins Gold card
NOEB7U


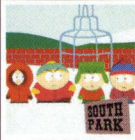




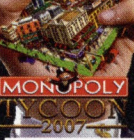














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FOR GAMES

AWESOME GAMES

 174586	 174580	 170705	 FEATURE GAME 174546	 176491	 176808	 170389	 170046	 170702	 170168
 175439	 175874	 170588	 174679	 170283	 174812	 176804	 176497	 175745	

COOL MOTOR GAMES MOVIE GAMES

 170169	 174551	 170391	 174544	 174552	 174611	 174570	 170158	 FEATURE GAME 174626
 170028	 170525	 171097	 174581	 175738	 176508	 175762		

RED HOT GIRL VIDS











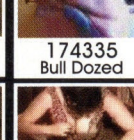


 170900 Jennifer Ellison	 175462 Red Hot Brunette	 179480 Raunchy Blonde	 174913 Jodie's 1st Strip	 175466 Lime Bikini Babe	 170892 Victoria Silvstedt
	 176104 Brunette Teaser	 175466 Lime Bikini Babe	 175467 Pink Bikini Tease	 175459 Raunchy Brunette	

FUNKY SCREENSAVERS

 175685 Boob Bouncer	 176370 Sexy Symbol	 170144 Rasta Baby	 170147 Sexy Screen Cleaner	 170155 The Rina
	 170149 Ganaster Kid	 176018 Stoned Cold Killer	 176015 R2D2 Anim	 176009 Jordan Flash

INSANE VIDS

THE FUNNIEST VIDS FOR URE MOB!

 175268 Girl Wrestle	 170534 Fat Mamma	 170885 Diarrhea Jacuzzi	 175535 Stickman War
 174339 Scary Shock	 170887 Sk8r break!	 179448 Wheele Disaster	
 171003 Girl Knockout	 174335 Bull Dozed	 175266 Blitch Fight	 170883 Ice Tranny
 171007 Tricycle Terror	 176316 Rat Attack	 170793 Beagina For BJ	 171346 Giant Slinashot
 174330 Asleep Then Scared		 179833 Treadmill Breaker	

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ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

SINGSTAR

Release: June 2007

Put the beer on ice and break out the Doritos, because *SingStar* is just about set to land on PS3. Details are still frustratingly scant, but it'll come with 30 tracks, HD music videos and will not only allow users to download new content, but to upload their own as well.

THE DARKNESS

Release: June 2007

Some superheroes are content with mincing about in lycra, slapping crooks on the wrist and rescuing kittens. Not *The Darkness* – this mean mofo prefers donning leather, and the only slapping he does is a fresh magazine into his nine millimetre. He also kicks dogs (probably). Looks slick.

BLACKSITE: AREA 51

Release: Mid 2007 (TBC)

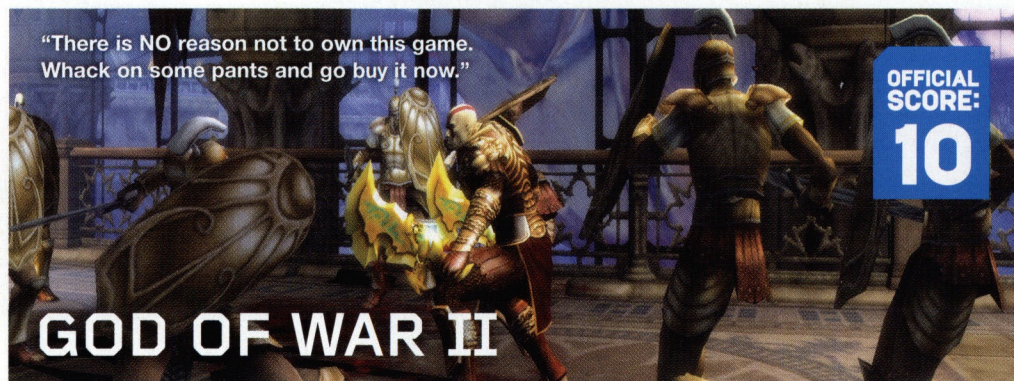
Aliens. The go-to bad guys of many a self-respecting videogame, runner-up only to Nazis and zombies (and possibly zombie Nazis). *Blacksite* is set to feature cutting-edge AI and life-like squad interactions and could be a shooter to watch.

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Release: Late 2007 (TBC)

Naughty Dog's new adventure has had a bit of a makeover since we first saw it. Set to be part *Tomb Raider*, part *Die Hard* and part *Indiana Jones*, *Uncharted* is a treasure-hunting, gun-slinging jungle romp. Now, if only somebody would give us a look at it...

PS2



OFFICIAL SCORE:
10

BURNOUT DOMINATOR

8

The reduced price-tag is tempered by the lack of crowd faves like Crash Mode, but it recaptures *B2*'s speed and *B3*'s intensity

CANIS CANEM EDIT

9

The game formerly known as *Bully* is more fun than having Jack Black as your substitute teacher. Sound the bell – school's in, suckers!

FINAL FANTASY XII

10

This is the most superbly crafted RPG out there. You'd be completely mad to miss this one.

GOD OF WAR II

10

There is NO reason not to own this game. Whack on some pants and go buy it now. Brutal and bloodthirsty, it's the best actioner on PS2.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

9

No multiplayer or co-op, but a big improvement on *GTA: Liberty City Stories*. A fitting last hurrah. Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

GUITAR HERO II

10

Guitar Hero II is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

OKAMI

9

Don't let this cult classic in the making pass you by. Absolutely mesmerising.

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

8

An under-featured update of the PS2's best cricket game, but still an absolute cracker.

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

9

Sam Fisher's latest is smart, pretty and it'll keep you up all night. Pretty much how we like our women too.

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

9

A unique and innovative bargain-priced street racer that puts the ailing series back on top of the competition. For lovers of fine automobiles.

PSP

CALL OF DUTY: ROADS TO VICTORY

6

First-person shooters on the PSP will struggle. This is no exception.

CHILI CON CARNAGE

6

Good humour, dodgy controls. This chili needs a few more habaneros.

EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

7

A great attempt at mixing nostalgia with innovation that falls short thanks to confusing art direction and a steep learning curve.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

10

Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best *GTA* game available next to *San Andreas*. Get it now.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

9

Forget *Acid*, this is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS

9

A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

8

Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity.

ROCKY BALBOA

6

Likely only to disappoint fans of the movie. Shallow boxing mechanics and a general lack of depth illustrate an ultimate waste of the license.

V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT

7

It looks good, it sounds good and it has a stack of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.



OFFICIAL SCORE:
09

PS3

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII 7

It's not without its flaws, but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

CALL OF DUTY 3 7

Call of Duty 3 is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead and wait for *Call of Duty 4*.

DEF JAM: ICON 8

There's a lot to dislike about this game, yet somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun. Holla back! And so forth.

ENCHANTED ARMS 8

Enchanted Arms is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it's a quirky game.

F.E.A.R. 8

F.E.A.R. is a seriously chilling ride but the graphics could've been a LOT sharper.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3 8

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION 9

F1CE looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES 7

Battlelines is a game that brims with potential but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE 5

Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION 6

Underwhelming new content and lacklustre visuals. Forget the Don, do yourself a "favour" and grab the PS2 version instead.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 9

It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

MOTORSTORM 10

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3.

NBA 2K7 8

Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT 8

Homecourt is the brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet. Instant fun.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON 8

A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

NHL 2K7 8

A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN 10

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

RIDGE RACER 7 9

Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungee jumping. The best *Ridge Racer* yet!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4

This is an absolutely terrible game. Atrocious controls, terrible camera, bestiality – avoid at ALL cost.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07 9

A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT 9

Obsessive and gripping both online and off, *Double Agent* will gobble you up. Obtain.

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8 7

Slick new visuals but still the same old skating and a severely downsized create-a-park feature. Neversoft needs to improve.

UNTOLD LEGENDS: DARK KINGDOM 5

An entirely forgettable effort. Bland, shonky hack 'n' slash action. Stick with the (surprisingly) superior PSP versions.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 8

VF5 is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3 8

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

SPIDER-MAN 3



PlayStation
SILVER AWARD
9/10

"There's a hell of a lot to like about *Spider-Man 3*..."

WHY GET IT?

- Being a superhero is always fun
- Genuinely interesting side missions
- Huge 20-hour storyline
- Swan diving off the Empire State is rad
- The fluid, graceful web-swinging is a blast!

VERDICT: It's the closest you'll ever come to being a superhero. Suit up now.

OFFICIAL SCORE:

09

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Tomb Raider
THE CONSOLE: PlayStation
THE YEAR: 1996

THE MOMENT: Remember *Jurassic Park*?

The cup of water reverberating as the hulking footsteps of a giant meat-eater shook the ground, the goat bait suddenly disappearing before landing as a half-chewed piece of offal on the sunroof of the SUV and the slow reveal of the T-rex was presented on screen, gnawing on the fence? Back in 1993 it was enough to make you brick your pants.

But the T-rex in *Tomb Raider* was scarier.

In *Jurassic Park*, you knew there was a T-rex in it. They told you there was a T-rex in it. When the hapless *Jurassic Park* debutants were stranded outside the T-rex pen without power, something bad was going to happen. Probably a T-rex.

In *Tomb Raider* things were decidedly different. Admittedly, entering the lost valley and being jumped by two velociraptors should be enough to get warning bells clanging – but even this was no preparation for what happened next.

What happened next was usually Lara being eaten, because the emergence of the T-rex from the curtain of darkness ahead is one of the all-time heart-stopping, controller-dropping reveals in the pantheon of videogames. However, if you did manage to collect yourself in time, pulling the shotgun off Lara's shoulder and pumping buckshot into its snout while somersaulting backwards usually finished off the spindly-armed relic relatively quickly. It was brief, but exhilarating.

Rarely since has a game blindsided you with such an intimidating enemy and a completely unexpected skirmish for which you were entirely unprepared. Up until this stage in *Tomb Raider* you'd been busy dispatching wolves, bears and bats. None of these held a candle to a giant lizard with rows and rows of (horribly pixelated) teeth. Graphics have improved exponentially and enemies these days come far bigger and far uglier, but are they as terrifying? Our rose-tinted glasses say no.

NEXT



HAZE

First hands-on report on Free Radical Design's genre-busting new shooter!



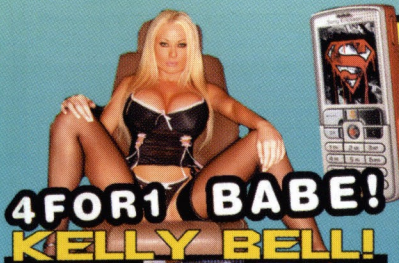
- See why *Call of Duty 4* redefines war games!
- Exclusive look at *Heavenly Sword*'s stunning assets!
- World's first PS3 demo disc – with four new PS3 demos!

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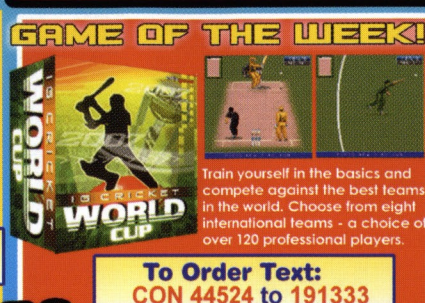
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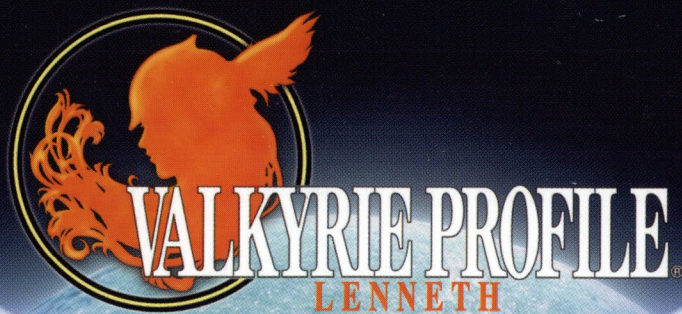


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